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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.

Please note: This site will only be accessible from March 1, 2020-March 31, 2020.
2020: The Beginning of a New Decade

By: Ben Ashcraft, LCSW, Foster Family Recruitment, Utah Foster Care

As New Year’s Eve came and the recent decade came to a close, I was able to reflect a lot on how much has happened in my life and family over that 10-year period. I was fascinated as I looked back. At the start of the decade, we were still just learning how to function with teenagers, enjoying having all 5 children at home. At the end, 3 children were already moved out and off to college, with just 2 remaining at home. Our family transformed significantly in the 10-year period. After this coming decade, we will be “empty nesters.” If you think about it, 10 years flies by real fast.

Reflecting on the past 10 years has helped me to reflect carefully on what I hope to accomplish in this coming decade. Children are so precious and we generally only have a short window to enjoy having them with us full-time in our home. In the early years of parenting, I believe I took a lot of it for granted. I’m hoping to make the most of the time I have left with my children at home. I would like to encourage you, wherever you are at in your family life, to reflect on your journey and think about what you hope to accomplish over this decade of life. When 2030 rolls around, what are 3 important things that you hope to look back and see that you were able to accomplish, particularly in areas relating to family life?

Mine are…

• To have helped my children develop a solid value system for themselves that can guide them.

• To have a large bank of positive family moments together that reminds them they are loved.

• Connect with each child in ways that will establish positive and healthy adult relationships with each adult child as they transition into their own marriage and family.

Have fun creating yours. I hope you have an awesome decade of life with many memorable moments.
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!

CEDAR CITY CLUSTER
Vicki (435) 590-0920

MANTI CLUSTER
Michelle (435) 633-3449

RICHFIELD CLUSTER
Holly (801) 360-1967

ST GEORGE CLUSTER
Shelly (801) 792-8506

ST GEORGE POST ADOPT CLUSTER
Tifiny (801) 494-3877
tifinyrose@hotmail.com

CEDAR CLUSTER
Emotionally Focused Parenting
Cliff Farnsworth, LCSW
February 19; 6:00-8:00pm
Festival Hall / 105 N 100 E

Come for a date night and dinner with your sweetheart. Cliff will direct a discussion on the importance of Emotionally Focused Parenting. Please RSVP to Vicki.

CEDAR CLUSTER
The Whole-Brain Child
Brian Young, SSW
March 11; 6:30-8:30pm
Festival Hall / 105 N 100 E

Based on the book “The Whole-Brain Child, Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child’s Developing Mind”. Childcare provided for those who RSVP. Must RSVP the number of children and adults to Vicki.

ST. GEORGE CLUSTER
5 Love Languages
Denice Beacham, UFC Trainer
February 11; 6:00-8:00pm
Location TBA

Denice will be presenting on “The 5 Love Languages.” Come with your partner or on your own. Dinner will be catered and there will be some giveaways. Must RSVP to Diane or Shelly.

ST. GEORGE CLUSTER
Technology Distractions
Les Harris, LCSW
March 11; 6:00-8:00pm
St. George UFC / 491 E. Riverside Dr. #2B

Les Harris will be discussing how we can prepare ourselves and our children to face some of the problems associated with technology.

RSVP FOR CLASSES & CLUSTERS!
If a class or Cluster is cancelled, moved or rescheduled, we can only alert you if you’ve RSVP’d! Also, if childcare is provided, it can only be offered to those who’ve RSVP’d. Help us help you — RSVP!

RSVP: CLIFF FARNSWORTH / (435) 656-8065
cliff.farnsworth@utahfostercare.org

utahfostercare.org/joinfacebook « Join a support group!
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<td>Richfield DCFS / 201 E 500 N</td>
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This is a great date night with your spouse. Come learn more about each other. Learn how you can care for each other by learning their love language.

Training will include a movie and discussion about common adoption related issues. Discussion will include what it is like to be a foster parent.

Training will provide basic information about IEP and 504 plans, what qualifies a child for a plan, and tips for how to request a plan for your child.
In the last 6 months, I have been getting trained in a new model of therapy called EFT that has given me some key reminders of things we need to remember as foster and adoptive parents. EFT refers to “Emotionally Focused Therapy”; it is all based on attachment research and reinforces the importance of emotional connections in relationships. I have long believed that you cannot heal from past traumatic experiences without emotional support in safe, secure, and stable relationships. That is what the key is when children enter foster care. Here are some of the key things I have learned while studying EFT:

• The most appropriate example for intimacy is that of an emotional bond. This emotional bond provides our need for safety, security, and connection.

• Emotion is key to organizing attachment behaviors and the way we see ourselves and others. When children have negative experiences, it damages their ability to form healthy relationships and learn to trust caregivers.

• Problems in relationships are maintained by the way interactions with others are organized and the dominant emotion experienced in the relationship. Too often the dominant emotion these children have experienced is fear. This causes problems when we try to form new relationships with them in our homes. In order to change this pattern, we have to help them feel new emotions associated with feeling safe.

• All people are born with healthy attachment needs and we adapt to our environment to try and get those needs met. Once a child expresses needs, and the needs are not met, the child becomes insecure and they learn to respond in maladaptive ways which leads to behaviors foster parents see as wrong or problematic. Being able to recognize and validate the child’s needs is key to helping the child heal and learn the healthy expression of emotions.

• In EFT it is believed that change is associated with accessing and reprocessing the emotional experiences of people in their relationships. This is done by creating new emotional experiences along with new ways of expressing emotions within a safe environment. This helps the child step out of the cycle of conflict they are familiar with. Changing the cycle allows for new interactions and bonds to be created. Change doesn’t occur primarily through helping the child gain new insight but by creating new, safe, emotional experiences.

In doing foster care we are taking in children in who have experienced trauma, pain, fear, and a host of other negative emotions. Their emotional experiences have taught them they are not safe. Our job is to provide a new emotional experience that helps them see the world as a safe place. Albert Einstein said “All knowledge is experience: everything else is just information”. We need to provide these children with an emotional experience that gives them knowledge to know they will be safe. Their past emotional experience has taught them they are not safe. As the title of my article states “Emotion is Key”. 
Do I Need a Mentor?
By Michelle Ostmark, Retention Services, Utah Foster Care

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 tries 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