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A TRADITION of EXCELLENCE
SAVE THE DATE!

UTAH FOSTER CARE SYMPOSIUM APRIL 23, 2020
PARK CITY UTAH

CEUs AVAILABLE
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.
Helping Our Kids through Anxiety
By: Heidi Naylor, Retention Services, Utah Foster Care

Our youth have all suffered traumatic stress. Separation from their primary families being towards the top of that list. This abandonment calls for a way to cope. We see this manifest in different ways. Some disconnect from their emotions, some over compensate, and they may store it in their bodies. It will show itself in a physical response. When coping with this trauma in an unhealthy way they create a pattern. 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. Help them learn to name it also. Because, you’ve got to name it to tame it. Realize that this will only work if you can practice reflective listening. Check out books that talk about our Upstairs Brains and Downstairs brains. 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 either your or their phones. Check out Moody Cow Meditates by Kerry MacLean and make a mindfulness jar.

Help them create an “anxiety kit” We always just grabbed a travel soap container and included something that engaged the five senses. Something they could see, something they could touch, something they could hear, something they could smell, something they could taste (Bold flavor like atomic fire balls, or sour candies work best) These were small enough for my kids to carry in a backpack. But, you can also make larger ones at home that include music, coloring pages, fidget toys, play dough, books, bubbles, or kinetic sand.

Consider getting 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 their bodies and how they work. Sometimes just having them run around the block is enough.

Have them write it out. Write or draw it out and tear in 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.

FIND MORE RESOURCES ONLINE
utahfostercare.org/western
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!

NORTH CLUSTER
Jessica (801) 432-0720
jessica.fostercare@gmail.com

CENTRAL CLUSTER
Beth (801) 426-8782
snb8782@yahoo.com

SOUTH CLUSTER
Teresa (801) 489-4178
utahsouthcluster@gmail.com

LEVEL III CLUSTER
Heidi (801) 373-3006
heidi.naylor@utahfostercare.org

ADOPTION CLUSTER
Ronnett (801) 369-9734
adoptedfosterkids@gmail.com
Anna (801) 369-6664
annafechter@gmail.com

KINSHIP CLUSTER
Carmen (801) 830-4646
flybabycarmen@gmail.com

INTRO TO TBRI

Formerly Pathways

Beverly Johnstone

March 18; 9:00am-4:00pm
Provo DCFS Room 5020 & 5030

Required to adopt. We will talk about post-adopt services & support, trauma’s impact on a child & how to implement trauma-informed parenting at home. Email bjohnstone@utah.gov to register.

HEALING TRAUMA

Modules 3 & 4

Terumi Sagers, BS

February 24; 5:30-8:30 pm
Fred House Academy/14727 S Minuteman Dr

Trauma Effects & Building a Safe Place for Children: How trauma can interfere with a child’s development and functioning and how to help them begin to feel safe.

HEALING TRAUMA

Modules 5 & 6

Terumi Sagers, BS

March 30; 5:30-8:30pm
Fred House Academy/14727 S Minuteman Dr

Dealing with Feelings and Behaviors & Connections and Healing: How to help children develop new emotional skills and positive behaviors.

HEALING TRAUMA

Modules 1 & 2

Tricia Jensen, SSW

May 18; 5:30-8:30pm
Fred House Academy/14727 S Minuteman Dr

Introduction to Trauma-Informed Care: Understanding how children may respond to traumatic events.

HEALING TRAUMA

Modules 7 & 8

Terumi Sagers, BS

April 27; 5:30-8:30pm
Fred House Academy/14727 S Minuteman Dr

Becoming an Advocate & Taking Care of Yourself: Become a trauma-informed advocate and increase your personal coping skills and resiliency.

HEALING TRAUMA

Terri Rowley, LCSW

March 30; 5:30-8:30 pm
Fred House Academy/14727 S Minuteman Dr

Locate your Cluster...

North: Cities north of Lindon to the Utah County border
South: Cities south of Provo including Millard/Juab
Central: Provo/Orem & Wasatch/Summit (for now)
Level III: Those who care for Level 3 children
Adoption: Those who have adopted from Utah’s foster care system (with or without current licenses)

Fred House Academy is located in Draper. It is on the east side of I-15, south of the DMV.
Infertility Issues
Madison Thomas, Infertility Center
February 20; 6:00-8:00pm
Utah Foster Care / 274 W Center St

We will talk about dealing with the day to day with the personal crisis of infertility and how it impacts our lives. Especially, when fostering.

CPR/First Aid Training
According to the Office of Licensing, ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSES ARE ACCEPTABLE. Feel free to find a course that suits you by searching “CPR/First Aid Training or Certification.” FYI, you can take a totally free course at the following website http://www.firstaidforfree.com/.

If you use this site, please take the “basic first aid” AND “Basic CPR” courses. They are separate courses and you will need each one to get licensed.

Caring for the Sexually Reactive Child
Les Harris, LCSW
March 4; 6:00-8:00pm
Orem UFC / 274 Center St

As we are ever evolving so is our understanding of sexual issues in our children. Les has 2 decades of experience serving this population of youth.

Including Children in Family Traditions
Keena Butler, RFC
Feb 4; 6:00-8:00pm
Orem UFC / 274 W Center St

Creating a dynamic of openness and inclusivity can be an opportunity for bonding and building on to our already established patterns of celebration.

“Yes Virginia, there is a birth family!”
Trish Jensen, SSW
March 18; 1:00-3:00pm
Orem UFC / 274 W Center St

From the perspective of an adopted child, learn why connection to our primary family is a benefit for both the adopted child and the new parents alike.

NORTH CLUSTER
Lessons Learned
Panel Discussion
March 24; 6:00-8:00pm
Orem UFC / 274 W Center St

A panel of experienced foster parents will discuss valuable lessons they have learned in areas like court, visitation, working with the state, and relationships with biological parents.

Central & Level 3 Clusters
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March 4; 6:00-8:00pm
Orem UFC / 274 Center St

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Our Unique Grief
By: Heidi Naylor, Retention Services, Utah Foster Care

Our role as foster parents is to work and promote the reunifications of families. Nothing is better than seeing a family make the necessary changes to complete their families again. We bring their children into our homes and we are asked to make them a part of our families. To treat them like they are our very own. If in the end parental rights are terminated, we are willing and able to make them a part of our families permanently. We also need to promote and work towards reunification. Reunification can become an overwhelming process for a foster family because of the duality of this role.

We bring them into our homes and our families. We try to create a safe environment. We get them enrolled in school. We seek the additional help they may need by asking for a 504 plan, an IEP, and sometimes a tutor. We get them caught up on all their doctors and dentist appointments. We start therapy. We try every new parenting technique we learn. Trying to find what works best for each child we have brought into our home. We take them to visits and deal with both the excitement, and the disappointment that visits can bring. We teach them things they did not know before. We get to experience some of their firsts. We laugh with them, we cry with them, and in the end, we all learn and grow.

Sometimes we get plenty of time to prepare for reunification. We are at court. We know the timetable. Sometimes that is not a luxury we are afforded. There are all sorts of reasons why this can happen. Primary family members come forward, court orders, housing can become suddenly available, and progress can be made faster than expected. Regardless of when that separation happens, we will grieve. Many of us suffer from infertility and often we have experienced pregnancy loss. People understand that loss. There are support groups, and memorials. This makes grieving the loss of another child so much harder. This is not a death. Nevertheless, it does not feel any less real.

Grieving a child that is still living. A child that is reunited with their family. Which is what we wanted for our kids in the first place. How do we describe that loss? My husband always says we break our own hearts to make theirs whole. It hurts. It hurts every single time.

So how can we work through our grief? Every one deals with it differently. Here are a few steps.

Acknowledge and talk about your grief. Especially recognize what may trigger you.

Realize that closure may come. However, it might not. You may have continued contact. You may never see them again. The latter was the case for our very first case. Closure came almost 10 years later when their birth mom reached out to me on Facebook. She shared her gratitude for us and pictures of her kids. The ones we shared for a time. We must realize this is the cost of breaking our own hearts sometimes.

Acknowledge that this kind of grief is not ours alone. This is often how primary families feel when their children are removed. It happens when children are placed in closed adoptions, when adult children choose to have no contact with their parents, for parents of missing children, for stepparents that have no legal rights to the children they helped raise, for the adoptive parents that experience a failed placement. Our children also experience this grief when parental rights are terminated and they become orphans of the living. We are not alone in this type of grief.

Take time. Whatever that looks like for you. Some times that means taking a little time before accepting another placement. Sometimes that means indulging in a little too much chocolate.

Spend time together as a family. We are not the only ones grieving. We are teaching our kids to learn more empathy. They are also losing playmates and siblings.

Find a way to remember and honor the child that shared your home. Do not be afraid to talk about them.

Realize not everyone will understand your grief. People will be insensitive. So find and build community with people who understand.

I once heard grief described as love that has nowhere to go. The kids that share our homes will never be replaced. But, we can honor our love for them by sharing it with another child. There very likely is another child out there. Another one right now that might need you. Not someone else. YOU. So do not give up even though it hurts.
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