

NEWS FROM YOUR PEER LIAISON



JOHN SMITH

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I UNDERSTAND... I AM A FOSTER PARENT TOO

IFAPA recognizes that foster parents often need the perspective of peers during the foster parenting and adoption experience.

I can provide support and assist you with questions regarding:

- Licensing requirements
- Training needs
- Respite care
- Behavior challenges
- Working with birth families
- Confidentiality issues
- And much more!



www.ifapa.org

Dear Parents

My newsletter is later this month, and it really isn't because I have been busy with the holidays. (although, I did have my annual battle setting up the Christmas tree). You see, this is my first holiday without my biological family that I grew up with! It is difficult, and yet unlike the children in our care, the reason why we are separated was not because I had to be removed from my family situation for something I had done and nothing which my mother did wrong that caused us to be separated. It was just nature taking its course. I knew it was eventually going to take place for me, but I still wasn't prepared for it! AND now, here comes the holidays!

AS I was dwelling on feeling sorry for myself, I realized that children in care most likely are experiencing similar feelings, BUT unlike children in care, I am not spending time wondering, "Why did she do this to me?" or "If only I had been better, we would still be together!" It's kind of hard to get excited about the holidays with those things rambling around their little minds. So let's ask ourselves, "How can we make a difference this Christmas in the life of a child in Foster Care?"

Every child deserves to have Happy Holidays, AND often it is up to us as Foster Parents to make sure this happens! This doesn't happen by showering with gifts, but rather, our responsibility to the child is to help them make these Holidays memorable in a positive way.

Find out more about any traditions they may have had at home (a meal, a cookie, opening gifts Christmas eve or Christmas morning). Let them know what to expect at your house (at our house if you don't like Oyster soup we will make something else).

Accept and acknowledge their feelings of sadness and loneliness. Include the children in holiday prep, making stuff, decorating. Help them pick out/make something for those in their family, that way they can take something with them when they visit (maybe it just a card or some cookies they made). Help the kids to avoid expecting things to be real good or real bad, and when they return home, be prepared to help them deal with things that may have happened on their visit!

Here's wishing you and yours the best of the holidays!

Take Care & God Bless – IFAPA John

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DATES ON DECK

December 15 – Providers/Community Supports at Sioux City NW AEA, 1520 Morningside Ave (6:30-8:30)

January 6 – **CPR Training** at West Central Iowa Support Group for Foster/Adoptive Parents in Carroll (7:00). Bring \$6 for the card.

February 3 – **1st Aid Training** at West Central Iowa Support Group for Foster/Adoptive Parents in Carroll (7:00). Bring \$6 for the card.

SUPPORT GROUPS (FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME FOR MORE INFORMATION!)

- West Central Iowa Support Group for Foster/Adoptive Parents (meets monthly (except July & December) on 1st Tuesday of month) – Carroll
- Denison Area Foster/Adoptive Parent Support Group (meets 4th Monday in October, January, March & June) – Denison
- Fort Dodge Lunch & Learn (meets monthly on 4th Thursday of month)
- Merville Support Group (meets monthly on the first Tuesday @ 6:30)
- Woodbury Lunch Support Group (meets monthly on 3rd Monday @ 11:00) – Sioux City
- Storm Lake Foster/Adoptive Support Group (meets Sept, Oct, March & April)
- Sioux City Support Group

(Check the IFAPA website www.ifapa.org and go to trainings or contact me if you need info about any classes or available trainings)

You should have received the 2015 IFAPA January-March Training Schedule by now, keep it handy so that you can plan accordingly!

ALSO just an FYI! IFAPA has posted and will be sending out the schedule for our Spring Conference. Check it out! Looks Good!

DECEMBER FOSTER PARENT MILESTONES

Please join me in thanking the following foster parents for their years of service to Iowa's children as August marks their renewal anniversary.

Thank you for your years of dedication!

- **10+ Years: Tony & Deborah Bean**
- **5+ Years: Sandra & Donald Stehr; Jeanette & Neal Keairns; Justin & Bobbie Sue Onken; Charles & Josie Weier**

From My Side of the Desk

I always think Christmas is a time to do things together as a family, (more than we usually do)! I also think it is a time when we can do some teaching, learning & sharing!

We set a jigsaw puzzle up on the card table that all ages play. The great part about this is the conversation that it generates. Whether it be a strategy or something a puzzle piece resembles. Just try to make certain that someone doesn't sneak off with one of the pieces so that they can have the last piece in!

It is also a chance to dig out an old board game or even a deck of cards. We have played UNO, Catch Phrase, and taught kids different family card games. Checkers can be played by any age. It is also a chance to learn how to be a gracious loser 😊

But, I think the best gift is to search out a good book and give it to the child! I used to cuss my sister because she would always write in the book, but the message you write the child, may become more valuable than the book!

-IFAPA John