

# NEWS FROM YOUR PEER LIAISON



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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](http://www.ifapa.org)

March, 2015

Dear Parents,

Twenty-five years ago this month, Connie and I received our first placements, two girls (7&13). With two boys (9&11) this was an adjustment. This was followed by two more girls, both high school aged. Those were the days of lots of lots of hairspray. I can still remember our youngest son telling me, "Do you know how long she spends in the bathroom?" (they shared a bathroom 😊) Anyway, eventually we settled on taking care of teen-aged boys and that is what we have done since. When we tell others, that we only foster teen-aged boys, many people think they now have proof why we are certifiable "nutty".

I think that one reason families choose not to foster teenagers is because they fear the children have done something to "land them in foster care." But, like most kids in the system, teens are typically in foster care due to some abuse or neglect in their home. For those of you that are still searching for your "niche" in the foster care world, take a look at fostering a teen. Here's a short list of the perks, but there are lots more!

- No diapers to change
- They sleep through the night
- They'll keep you up to date on the latest fashion trends
- No bottles, formula or burp rags required
- They can learn from you, and you'll learn from them
- They'll teach you how to text AND use Facebook 😊
- They are NOT typically morning people, so you will get to sleep in!
- All kids grow up to be teens eventually

Some of our friends that prefer babies like to do so because they like witnessing the "firsts" – first steps, first words. I like to tell them with teens there are still plenty of "firsts" and they are every bit as important when it comes to a happy childhood. First driver's license

- First dance, First prom
- First kiss, First love. First breakup
- First love
- First day of high school
- First job, First paycheck

Sometimes all it takes to make these first moments meaningful is acknowledging their importance. All joking aside, there are lots of teens who are facing tomorrow knowing they are completely alone. With acceptance and understanding, you can help change a foster teen's life by offering a loving committed environment to live and grow – a real home with patient people who care – and the freedom to dream of a happier future that all kids deserve.

Take Care & God Bless – IFAPA John

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## DATES ON DECK

March 3 – **Planning for a Placement** at West Central Iowa Support Group for Foster/Adoptive Parents in Carroll (6:00).

March 6 & 7 – **IFAPA Conference** – Adventureland Inn, Altoona

March 12 – **Legislative Breakfast** – State Capitol, Des Moines (7:00-9:00AM)

March 16 – **Challenging Behaviors**– Sioux City Support Group (6:30-8:30PM)

March 23 – **Managing Your Child's Wireless & Wired Connections** – Denison Support Group (6:30-8:30)

March 26 – **Lunch & Learn** – Fort Dodge (11:30AM-1:00)

March 28 – **Connect the Dots: Emotions to Behaviors** – Sioux City (9:00-12:15)

March 28 – **How to Talk so Kids Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk** – Sioux City (1:30-4:45)

**\*\*Should any of you attend the IFAPA Conference or the Legislative Breakfast, make sure to hunt me down. I will be the FAT guy in the Blue IFAPA Polo. Hope to see you!**

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

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

## FEBRUARY FOSTER PARENT MILESTONES

Please join me in thanking the following foster parents for their years of service to Iowa's children as this month marks their renewal anniversary. Thank you for your years of dedication!

- 15+Years: Tammy&Kirk Metcalf; Roni&JohnFox
- 5+Years: Judy Tuhn; Verna Spotted Wood

## From My Side of the Desk

Tuesday night, we have a Support Group Meeting in Carroll. Really not looking forward to it, because Joe Vanderheiden won't be there. For as long as I have attended this support group, Joe & Cathe have been there to greet me. Usually Joe had a joke (not always that funny) and he always had a smile and a listening ear. When Connie & I attended his wake, his oldest daughter told us that her parents being foster parents were the best part of growing up. We also met three of their former foster children who told of the Dad they had lost. It was very humbling to speak with them. It made me wonder where any of us would be without the support of parents!

**AMAZONSMILE:** IFAPA is now registered under Amazon Smile. People who shop at Amazon can select IFAPA and .5% of your eligible purchases will be donated to IFAPA!

**AND REMEMBER:** I am just an email/phone call away. I am here for you! If you have a question, concern or celebration, give me a call. The conversations which I have with other parents are the best part of my day!

-IFAPA John