

# NEWS FROM YOUR PEER LIAISON

## December 2015



**MICHELLE JOHNSON**

IFAPA Peer Liaison

**How to Contact Me:**

844-627-8303

515-619-9927

mjohnson@ifapa.org

**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!

### Helping Children in Care Cope During the Holidays

The holidays are coming! Besides a full belly and an empty wallet, what does that mean? For the children in our care, it means some developmental grieving. This is something that is discussed in PS-MAPP class during Meeting 3. Developmental grieving is when children go back through the grieving process due to milestones in their lives (holidays, birthdays, etc.) because they are not with their birth family for these events. If a child in your care is behaving in a way that is not typical for them, ask yourself if that child could be experiencing developmental grieving. A few ways to help the developmental grieving process:

- Have everyone go around the room and share a memory they have of a past holiday.
- Don't push the child to talk about their birth family, if they share a memory from school that is okay!
- Help the child work on their life book.
- Ask the child what their favorite food is from each holiday and then make it for them.
- Make sure not to cancel therapy appointments during the holidays no matter how busy your schedule gets.
- Last but not least, take care of YOU! You need to be at your best to help them through this difficult time.

This can be a tough time for kids in care. If the children have not experienced a holiday with you, it can be overwhelming to have so many places to go, so much food to eat, so many relatives they have never met, and so many presents to unwrap. (Remember the *Imaginary Journey* and opening the door to all of those new faces...or the *First Day* roadwork from PS-MAPP?) Keep in mind that what is "normal" for you is very foreign to them. If a child is having behaviors, they are likely not trying to ruin the holiday spirit, but rather are expressing feelings of being overwhelmed or anxious.



# NEWS FROM YOUR IFAPA PEER LIAISON



There are lots of fun things to do with the children at this time of year.

Building a snowman is a fun family activity.



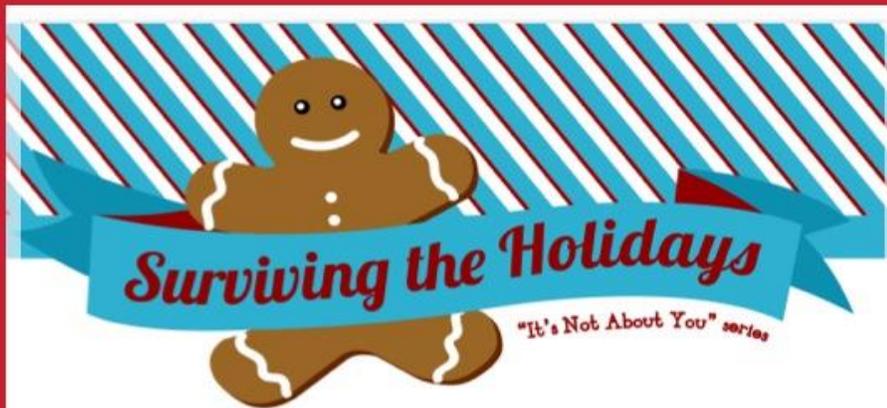
Sledding or ice skating are fun ways to burn off extra energy.



Make sure to take time and relax. When you are go, go, going all the time it can be stressful for everyone.



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**



Join Iowa KidsNet and IFAPA for a free training to help foster and adoptive families learn about “Surviving the Holidays.” Our presenter will be Alyssa Caldabeck, LMSW. This training is from IFAPA’s “It’s Not About You” training series, which helps participants learn about trauma informed parenting skills and strategies. These trainings are approved for two hours of foster parent credit.

**Tuesday, December 15**

**600 – 800 pm**

Lutheran Church of Hope  
925 Jordan Creek Parkway  
West Des Moines

No RSVP needed Please contact Beth Vannevel-Clark at [bvannevelclark@fouroaks.org](mailto:bvannevelclark@fouroaks.org) with questions.



I will be attending this “Surviving the Holidays” training and would love to meet you. Unfortunately, there is no child care for this event. Please join us!