Happy New Year! After all the holiday activities, it’s time to get back into our regular meeting routine. Our first meeting of the new year will be held on Tuesday, January 18, from 7-9 p.m., at the Vineyard Community Church, 319 W. Bremer Avenue, in Waverly.

Elaine Slade, R.N., who is Patient Care Coordinator with the Visiting Nurses Association, will be providing our training this month on Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS). Elaine will cover the following topics during the training:
- Define Shaken Baby Syndrome
- Identify the signs and symptoms of SBS
- Through use of the SBS Simulator, show areas of the brain that are affected by severe shaking
- Explain what happens physically when a baby or small child is shaken
- Explain how a baby’s crying can trigger a caregiver’s shaking a baby
- Identify the characteristics or profile of a person likely to shake a baby
- Formulate a plan for handling frustration, anger, and stress when a baby cries
- Identify resources for additional information on SBS

For many years, Elaine has also worked with the Homes with Healthy Children home visitor parenting program so she is very experienced working with birth families. Two hours foster parent training credit will be provided.

Child care will be available for newborns through 12-year-olds in the church nursery and the teen support group will meet with Kate Haberman-Foelske. Please bring a snack item to share with the group.

Since Tiffany Dodd has resigned her position as IKN Adoption Specialist, the adoption support group will not meet until further notice. Adoptive parents, of course, are welcome to join us for our regular meeting.

AAFPG Receives Generous Gifts

Our group is very grateful to have received a number of very generous gifts in the past several weeks. The include:
- $2169.89 from the Fredsville Lutheran Church, rural Cedar Falls, to be used as needed.
- $500 from the Union Congregational United Church of Christ in Reinbeck for Christmas gifts and our Certified Respite Program.
- $500 from CUNA Mutual Insurance Company to help with our family holiday party as well as 24 Seek-and-Find Christmas books.
- Christmas gifts for 26 foster children from the Union Congregational United Church of Christ in Reinbeck and the Shell Rock United Methodist Church.
- A variety of gifts including toys, games, backpacks, school supplies, calculators, diapers from employees at Waverly Health Center.

We appreciate each of these organizations for supporting our area foster and adoptive families and the children in our homes.
Due to changes at DHS, licensing and relicensing of foster homes in Bremer, Butler, and Franklin Counties will now be handled by Amanda Bean who is based in the Mason City DHS office. If you need to reach Amanda you can call her at 641-421-1219 or email abean@dhs.state.ia.us. Grundy County has been assigned to Joni Duffy who works out of the Fort Dodge DHS office. You can reach Joni at 515-573-1684 or by email at jduffy@dhs.state.ia.us.

Plans are underway for a really exciting family event for area foster families in February. We’ll share more details at the January meeting as well as in a separate mailing coming later this month.

The activities of our group are funded in large part by generous grants and donations from the Waverly-Shell Rock United Way, the Bremer, Butler, and Grundy County Community Foundations, the Waverly Community Foundation, the Waverly Exchange Club, CUNA Mutual, and Fredsville Lutheran Church. We thank all of these organizations for their support.

If you are currently receiving our newsletter by mail and would be willing to receive a copy electronically instead, please email Nancy at magnall_ifapa@msn.com. Each copy we are able to send by email saves our group about 60 cents which we can then use for other activities and supports for our member families.

In December we received from First Book a donation of several Hooked on Phonics kits for children ages 4-8. These Learn to Read kits, with a retail value of over $150 each, contain DVDs, CDs, workbooks, books, and flashcards. We still have four kits available to families to use with children in their homes. If you would like one of the kits, call or email us. First come, first served.

We have a variety of items available in our lending closet including car seats of various sizes, high chairs, baby swings, Bumbo chair, etc. For a complete list of items available to loan for use with foster placements, check our website at www.freewebs.com/allisonareafosterparents. These items are available for any of our member families to access, so please take advantage of them. A complete list of the resources available in our lending library is also available on our website. The library is kept at the Vineyard Community Church in Waverly and you can check out items at any regular monthly meeting.

The annual IFAPA Spring Training Conference is coming up on March 5 and 6 at the Ramada Tropics Resort and Conference Center in Des Moines. Two full days of training options are available as well as the opportunity to meet and interact with foster and adoptive parents from around the state. Complete conference information is available on the IFAPA website at www.ifapa.org. Our group is offering a $50 scholarship for up to five members of our group to assist with the registration fee for the conference. If you would like to apply for one of the scholarships, call or email.

The Holiday Party was a huge success with nearly 100 in attendance. Thanks to Tucker and Marshelle Else for opening their church to our group, to Tom “Santa” Singewald and to Toni Lovejoy and her friend Michael for the professional photographs.

On January 29 and February 12 we will be training our second group of certified respite providers. They should be certified and ready to begin providing respite by May. Unfortunately, we will be losing several of our original group of providers in May when they graduate from college and move out of the area. We appreciate their service to our families over the past months. If there are foster or adoptive families who are interested in using the certified respite program who have not yet completed the mandatory training session, we will be scheduling another training some time in the coming months. Contact us if you are interested.
Other Area Support Group Meetings

We are fortunate to have several excellent foster/adoptive support groups in this area. Families are welcome to attend whichever group best meets their needs and works best with their family schedule. Other January meetings in this area include:

**Black Hawk County Foster Parent Group**
Tuesday, January 11
7-9 p.m.
Grace Lutheran Church, 1024 W. 8th Street in Waterloo
Training on *Laughter Yoga*
Call Dianna Seedorff for more information at 888-622-4521

**Tri-County Support Group**
Tuesday, January 11
6:00-8:30 p.m.
Osage Alliance Church, 726 State Street in Osage
Call Josh Pedretti for more information at (563) 419-7057

**Mason City Area Foster Parent Group**
Tuesday, January 18
Doors open at 6:30; Speaker from 7-9 p.m.
DHS Liberty Room, 22 North Georgia Street in Mason City
Training on *Domestic Violence* with Pam Jones
Call Christie McGuire for more information at 800-720-9850 Code 62
Parents: Invest in Your Relationship

Remember the days before having kids? No pressures; do what you want; just you and your partner.

Enter the children. Juggling schedules; competing demands for time; no privacy; relationship stretched to the limit.

Many parents forget that in order to give to their kids, they must give to each other first. When parents do give to each other first, it is as if they are recharging their batteries so that they then have more energy to give to their children.

The challenge for some couples is the belief that they cannot find either time or someone to rely on for the care of the kids while they have their time together.

Time, being an elusive commodity, must be scheduled. Just as the kids activities are scheduled and occur without interruption, so too must time for the parents. When parental time is held as sacred as the time for the kids’ activities, then time for parents is more likely to occur. For many parents the thought of taking time can even be overwhelming. So if this is how it feels, parents are advised to start slowly, maybe scheduling their time together at least once per month to start.

If baby-sitting is a concern, parents can consider grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, a responsible teenager and even a friend.

At times parents can get creative about finding moments for each other. Rather than weekends or evenings, perhaps there is time for breakfast out or even lunch while the kids are in school.

If money is an issue, parents can consider activities such as bike riding or going for a walk together.

At issue here is investing in the parental relationship. When parents don’t take time for themselves, they increase the risk of drifting apart, which in turn can undermine their relationship – something definitely not in the kids’ best interests.

Parental bonds need to be as strong and secure as parent-child bonds. Parents who take time for each other, have the opportunity to catch up with each other, reflect on their personal and relationship needs and then the needs of the children. They can keep the spark in the relationship and provide a great role model to their children of how parents can get along. Investing in the parental relationship also sets a boundary between parents and children. Children see their parents are a unit and are less likely to be able to divide and conquer parents who are close, loving, and caring.

Want to help your kids? Make sure you charge up the battery in the parental relationship so as the children draw on your energy, you have something to give and a way to recharge again.

(Reprinted from www.Yoursocialworker.com; Gary Direnfeld, MSW, RSW)