

1989



2009

Foster Family Service

Celebrating 20 Years

PRIDE Training for Foster Families

We're really excited about the new training material we'll be presenting to our foster families this year. The trainings are called "PRIDE" and have been developed by the Child Welfare League of America for foster and adoptive families. We have been borrowing bits from this material for many years, but this is exciting because we have purchased the whole package (which includes literature, video/DVDs, group exercises and homework/handouts), all of which bring together a wealth of information about how to support our foster children through foster care and onto their permanent plan placement (such as Reunification or adoption).

Beginning in January 2009 we'll be having our the first of our new "PRIDE Pre-certification Trainings". These are six weekly sessions (or may be offered as two or three longer sessions on Saturdays) designed to prepare foster and adoptive families for their first placements. These will also be available to take (in part or full) by families who are already certified, but would like to get hours toward their yearly training requirement (twelve training hours per foster parent, per year). You can ask your FFS social worker to direct you to a particular session of the six, which might best fit your current interest or need.

We'll also be offering "Advanced PRIDE" trainings regularly to keep advancing the skills and knowledge of are already certified foster homes, and of course, to meet the yearly training requirement. We'll be putting up schedules for 2009 early in the year, so you can come to a training and begin to see what PRIDE is about.

I'm hopeful that this material will bring many more of the great discussions we've had in trainings throughout the years, and bring us to an ever deeper satisfaction that we are doing the best that we can for our children. Please give us feedback about your experiences in training this year, because I and all the administrators will order more of what your think is helpful, and less of what you think is not.

Thank you for your "pride" and commitment, in what you do for our children,

Erin Guzman, Supervising Social Worker, PRIDE Trainer

January 2009

Wendy Knutson, Editor

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Lic#097003903
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Serving Our Community's Youth Since 1989

Laughter, Bonding & Adopting Older Children

Reprint from Fostering Families Today;2004. By Pat O'Brien

When we place teens and pre-teens for adoption they simply assume at the time of placement that it is a matter of time before they will be rejected yet again and ultimately kicked out of this new household. The newly placed youth usually proceed cautiously to protect themselves from the expected rejection they believe will occur soon by staying somewhat detached from the new family and by resisting getting close.

How can adoptive parents of teens and pre-teens prove they are worth bonding to? Shared laughter between parent and child is an incredibly effective way to cement a new parent/youth relationship and to speed along the bonding of that relationship. Christian Hageseth's book, "A Laughing Place," noted that "humor is essential to the enterprise of being a parent. It may be the single best antidote for parent burn-out. Humor plays a central role in parent/child bonding." In his book, "The Laughter Prescription," Dr. Laurence Peter states that "shared humor creates a bond between people. It says 'we both see, understand, and enjoy.' The shared memories of the funny stories cement relationships." Children and youth love silliness. Even those teenagers who seem not to appreciate anything do, in fact, appreciate it when the adults in their lives act silly and playful. This relays to the youth that you are someone who might be a safe person - by going out on a limb, by taking the risk of embarrassing yourself, by being playful and silly - you give the youth the message that you might even be someone worth the risk of bonding to.

The following ideas may help you to enhance bonding and laughter in your household. Many of these ideas have been taken from Vicki Lansky's book "101 Ways to Make Your Child Feel Special."

1. Take your child to the local magic store. Buy some magic tricks and teach your child how to do the tricks. Kids love to be able to trick other people. It is empowering for children to possess some knowledge that other people do not have.. When they grow up they will always be able to recall fondly the parent who took them on a trip to the local magic store and bought them the tricks that allowed them to fascinate, and perhaps even make other people laugh.
2. Host a "un-birthday party," allowing them to invite a group of friends and family members to a party not tied to a birthday. The other kids invited to the party will enjoy and remember your child for. That, in turn, will create a memory that your child will remember you for.
3. Send your child a funny greeting card by mail. You can make it, or you can buy one especially designed for kids. Kids love to receive mail. And if the mail is funny it creates another bonding experience your child will remember you for.
4. Purchase the newspaper published on your child's birthday. Give it as a special gift. This sends your newly placed teen or pre-teen child the message that his or her birthday is an important day in your life because he or she was born on that day.
5. Next time you and your children see a photo booth invest in some funny-face photos of the two of you together.
6. When you find a comic strip or cartoon that is relevant to your child in some way, photocopy it with a cut-out picture of your child's head placed over the favorite comic character's head.
7. Teach your child a few simple riddles or jokes to tell friends so that she or he can get a good laugh. Creating a laugh gives kids a powerful and wonderful feeling.
8. Design a special frame for a permanent, prominent display of a current yearly photo of your child. Keep the most current photo one on top of the old one and let the frame serve as storage for those pictures of past years.

Another way to show your child you are a fun and safe person is to share your imperfections. Let your child play with your vulnerabilities, share with your child your most embarrassing moments, or encourage your child to share with you one of his or her most embarrassing moments. Kids feel imperfect about a lot of things and this is particularly true for new kids placed at older ages. Children appreciate a parent who can playfully make a fool out of him or herself, or a parent who

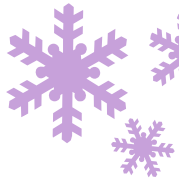
Continued on Page 4

We Are Proud To Say...

Congratulations to **Taylor M.** of the *Gilbert CFH*, her social worker tells us her dedication and hard work has paid off. Taylor has surpassed her goals and accumulated an extraordinary amount of credits toward high school graduation. **We are all proud of you!**

From the *Resendes CFH*, we here that **Dillon M.** and the rest of his school band put on a fantastic Winter Concert last month!

Haley M., Liam R. and **Zoe R.** all got to play in the snow all Christmas week! They made snow angels, had a snowball fight and even took a few bites of snow. **Haley** also wants you all to know she is doing very well in her gymnastics and dance classes. **We are glad you are all having a great winter vacation!**



Marley J. also had a great holiday with a day trip to visit his Grandpa.

Look on the Bright Side

By *Christina Fairgood*

I will not let my heart be troubled

Even though my family has its struggles

My mother loves me so much that she leaves me gasping

But my dear Lord and saviors love is everlasting

I have seven siblings that keep me going each day

The fights and quarrels will never go away

But the memories and good times are here to stay

So ask me why I love them and I know exactly what to say

My older brother Joseph is one heck of a marine

But sometimes he can be ridiculously mean

I love you big brother with all my heart

But when you are shipped out its like the family is apart

When things don't go my way yeah I'm going to pout

But then I ask myself what am I so mad about

The memories and knowing that they care brings a smile

But in the end its all worth while

The Welcome Mat Is Out For...

The McClendon Family Home

The Iliescu Family Home

The Eble Family Home

The Davis Family Home

The Stocker Family Home

We are always interested in certifying new homes. If you know of anyone who may be interested have them call their local office.

Potential Foster Parents can call one of our offices or find a Pre-Application at our website:

www.fosterfamilyservice.org

Foster Family Service Office Numbers:

Sacramento (916) 487-2111

Cameron Park (530) 676-6226

Lake Tahoe (530) 544-2111

Stockton (209) 474-1549

Santa Rosa (707) 576-0522

Oroville (530) 533-1576

Jackson (209) 223-3691

Notes From Our Director

I hope that all of our readers enjoyed their holidays.

As for me, I am “holidayed out!” I’m ready for the new year, and all the promise that this fresh start brings. As was mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, starting this month we will begin offering the PRIDE training model for continuing families. The driving force behind this is our recognition that adopting special needs children from foster care does bring many long-term challenges, and we want to do everything possible to prepare our adoptive parents. Foster Family Service doesn’t want to see adoptions we’ve facilitated end up failing years down the road, and we trust that our families agree with this.

On a related note, we chose to print the feature article regarding laughter, bonding and adopting older children because I really liked that author’s ideas on this subject. We’ve seen several families adopt older children since we started our program, and these special kids require a unique approach because they are generally not as cuddly-cute or dependent as little ones that are being adopted.



Happy New Year to all our readers!

John

Cont. from page 2...

Laughter, Bonding & Adopting Older Children

can take a joke from a child.

Taking the time to help your child develop his or her own "joy journal" is another wonderful bonding experience. Kids love to be able to tell things to people that will make them laugh. If they have a joy journal full of funny stories, especially stories that have occurred since their placement as a teen or pre-teen with you or another adoptive family that you know, it will continuously remind them of the good times they shared since moving in with you or their new family. This is bound to help cement the parent/child relationship and bond.

I can go all day with stories about how laughter, playfulness and silliness help cement relationships. Always remember how important it is to be silly, to share your imperfections, to give your child permission to kid around and joke with you, and to savor these stories by writing them down in your own, and your child's, joy journals.



Training Corner

Contact your FFS Social Worker for more information on these upcoming training opportunities:



***PRIDE** (read more on the front page)

***Parent Project and Loving Solutions**

***Adoption Support Groups** offered by Foster Family Service on the first Monday of each month in Cameron Park and the first Saturday of each month in So. Lake Tahoe. Please RSVP.
