

# 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)

January, 2016

Dear Parents,

It's a new year: Time for self-reflection and resolutions. This year resolve to put yourself first for a change – at least once in a while. Caring for children in foster care can be difficult, draining, exhausting and frustrating. Therefore it is important that foster parents take the time to step away, regroup and recharge – in other words we must take time to care for ourselves. On top of lengthy to-do lists, we are also dealing with challenging behaviors. Children in foster care often project their anger and frustration onto us, which can wear us down.

Remember the safety talk you get before a flight begins? In case of an emergency, oxygen masks will drop from overhead; you are instructed to put your oxygen mask on first and then help those around you. The idea is that you can't help anyone else if you don't have the oxygen you need. The same is true for being a foster parent. It is hard to be the calm, reasonable and compassionate parent we want and need to be if we are too stressed out. In other words, make sure you get a little TLC.

Are you guilty of not taking time for yourself? The National Child Traumatic Stress Network offers these warning signs that you might be nearing compassion fatigue:

- You feel mentally and physically exhausted
- You are using alcohol, food or other substances to combat stress and comfort yourself.
- Your sleep is often disturbed
- You are feeling numb and distanced from life
- You are feeling less satisfied
- You are moody and irritable
- You have physical ailments – headaches and stomachaches

If you suspect you are entering the compassion fatigue zone, it's time to practice some basic self-care. This includes:

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating well
- Getting some physical exercise
- Using alcohol in moderation, or not at all
- Taking regular breaks from stressful activities
- Laughing every day
- Expressing yourself
- Letting someone else take care of you

Deena McMahan, a licensed social worker, said it's important for foster parents to realize that they are worth taking care of and their happiness and well-being are essential to good parenting. She recommends making self-care part of your routine – daily, weekly and monthly. Suggestions include:

- Joining a support group where you can talk with others who face the same struggles.
- Creating down time every day--maybe it's a morning walk, 10 minutes with the paper and a cup of coffee
- Routinely have something to which you look forward--coffee with a neighbor once a week, date night with your partner once a week or a massage once a month.

“Caring for children who have special needs is a matter of the heart. Self-care is a mind-set and a positive choice. If you can find a balance between caring for your children and meeting your own needs, you will ultimately be much better equipped to do both,” McMahan said.

Take Care and God Bless – IFAPA John

## DATES ON DECK

Tuesday, January 5, (7:00PM-10:00PM) **CPR & First Aid Training**; at Family Resource Center, 502 West 7<sup>th</sup> St., Carroll.

Saturday, January 16, (9:00AM-12:15PM) **Calming the Trauma Storm** at Stoney Creek Inn, 300 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Sioux City.

Saturday, January 16, (1:30PM-4:45PM) **When Old Parenting Strategies Don't Work! Help Us Please!** at Stoney Creek Inn, 300 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Sioux City.

Saturday, January 30, (9:00AM-12:15PM) **Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter Training** at ICCC East Campus, 2031 Quail Avenue, Fort Dodge.

Saturday, January 30, (1:15PM-5:30PM) **CPR & First Aid** at Fort Dodge – site to be announced. You must register for this through IFAPA either by mail or online. Register by Friday, January 15 to avoid late fees.

*(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)*

\*\*And, don't forget, if it has been three years since you last took an approved **CPR & First Aid** training or five years since you took your **Mandatory Child Abuse** training, you will need to complete these before you can be re-licensed. If you can't remember, touch base with your IKN or DHS licensing workers; they will know!

## JANUARY 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!

- 20+ Years: Shirley & Larry Tech; Patricia Webb
- 10+ Years: Joe & Christine Collins; Sally & Timothy Kraayenbrink
- 5+ Years: Jeannette Knight; Angela & Keith Schrunk; Carol Watchorn

## HEADS UP! EYES & EARS OPEN!

*And as part of a new federal law, foster parents are now required to complete a Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Training by September 30, 2016. In order to complete this requirement, IFAPA has created a training video which is available on our website. It takes about 30 minutes to complete and you just as well get it done before next fall!*

*AND.....SPRING CONFERENCE DATES AND LOCATION HAVE BEEN CHANGED! :*

**IFAPA's Spring Conference**  
**Friday & Saturday, April 8 & 9, 2016**  
**Airport Holiday Inn & Convention Center - Des Moines**  
**More INFORMATION should be available this month!!**



## From My Side of the Desk!

Are you making New Year's Resolutions this year?? I'm not too sure I am up for it again. I didn't do so good last year! I think most of them were gone before the snow was! However just as we had ham again on New Year's Day and oyster stew on Christmas Eve, it looks like this is yet another tradition I am going to continue.

Have you ever thought about those traditions (some of them may be everyday traditions) which you may unconsciously continue and you don't know why? Or if you remember why, you might smile as you do them? I think it is time to step back and ask "What traditions are we passing on to the children living with us?" Or better yet, "What traditions are we allowing those children to continue in our homes?" Too often we only think about traditions at holidays and other special dates. But they are around more often than we think. Encourage those living with you to share important things they remember and encourage them not to forget while we both share with each other!!

**AND REMEMBER:** I am just an email/phone call away. I am here for you! If you ever 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**