

NEWS FROM YOUR PEER LIAISON

May, 2016



JOHN SMITH

IFAPA Peer Liaison

How to Contact Me:

877-305-3396

712-665-4011

jsmith@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!

Dear Parents,

Happy National Foster Care Month! Thanks to a proclamation by President Reagan in 1988, establishing May as National Foster Care month, we annually celebrate our vocation as foster parents every May.

I had a great newsletter ready to go this month, but over the weekend, I did a lot of reminiscing and spent a lot of time thinking about how Connie and I got into this game.

Connie and I often refer to ourselves as “The Accidental Foster Parents!” We probably came up with that phrase because about the time we became foster parents there was a movie out called “The Accidental Tourist.” Why do we really call ourselves accidental? Because unlike most of the rest of you, we had never thought much about becoming foster parents until one February Friday afternoon many years ago. A social worker whom I was working with in my position as a school principal called me up and said she had an emergency and wondered if we could help her out. Connie and I talked it over with our boys (just as we have discussed every placement since) and figured we could; after all, the worker said it would just be for a couple of weeks 😊

Well, we took our training (I think it was two Saturdays, not much), we became licensed and those two little girls’ grandparents picked them up when school was over in May (first clue that calendars don’t exist in foster care.)

I tell you all this, because after nearly 30 years, I still remember those two girls’ names, I remember the worker that brought them to us, AND I remember the licensing worker that first licensed us. We learned a great deal in that first placement. But most of all, over the past years we have learned that foster care is a much-needed temporary service provided for children until the child can be returned to the care of his or her family.

Things have changed since we were first licensed. I would hope that now we do a better job of assisting and engaging children and youth in foster care as we help them make decisions that affect their lives. I hope that we better support birth families, child welfare professionals, and anyone else who helps these children!

Please take this whole Foster Care Month to recognize the part we each play in enhancing the lives of children and youth in foster care and CELEBRATE!

Take Care & God Bless – IFAPA John



www.ifapa.org

DATES ON DECK

- Tuesday, May 3, 2016; 7:00PM-9:00PM; It's Not About You: Summer Transition; at Carroll Pizza Ranch, 425 US Hiway 30 W; Come early and dine beforehand; John will be there at 6:00 to discuss questions, concerns and celebrate with you!
- Saturday, May 7, 2016; 8:15AM-4:00PM; Together we Can Conference-Planning for Successful Transitions; at Iowa State Fairgrounds, Des Moines. *Register at IFAPA website*
- Saturday, May 14, 2016; 9AM-3PM; Beyond Consequences Live with Heather Forbes at Fred Maytag Scout Center in Des Moines. *Register at IFAPA website*
- Tuesday, May 31, 2016; 7:00PM-9:00PM; Topic: To Be Determined; at Carroll Pizza Ranch, 425 US Hiway 30 W; Come early and dine beforehand; John will be there at 6:00 to discuss questions, concerns and celebrate with you!

(Check the IFAPA website www.ifapa.org and go to trainings, or contact me if you need info about any classes or available trainings)

**Also, ALL foster parents are now required to complete Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Training by September 30, 2016. A training video is available on the IFAPA website. It takes about 30 minutes to complete. You just as well get it done before next fall!*

****Friends of Foster Care grant money is still available!
The link with more information is:
<http://www.ifapa.org/resources/Friends-of-Children-in-Foster-Care-Program.asp>**

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

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: Martha & Dick Hagar
- 10+ Years: Patricia & James Dick; Sue & Tim Speers
- 5+ Years: Norman & Cammie Winkel; Kayla Sencebaugh



From My Side of the Desk!

This weekend Connie and I were in Omaha using the Christmas present our children gave us. The Orpheum Theatre was around the corner from the building where I worked for my uncle who I also lived with the summer I was 13. Seeing and going back into what is now part of the Old Market area triggered a flood of memories. By today's standards, Uncle Bob wouldn't be viewed as a suitable family placement. Uncle Bob ran a pool hall and was a bookie! I learned a lot that summer and that placement had a positive impact on my life.

Nearly 20 years ago as I left a position as a school principal in Omaha, the parents gave me the plaque, PRIORITIES. It reads, "A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove ...but the world may be different because I was important in the life of child."

What we have doesn't make a difference, it's what we give! Uncle Bob was important to me, just as you are important to the lives of your children!

-IFAPA John