



REGIONAL RESOURCE TEAM: REGION 4

FAMILY NEWSLETTER

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **31 Foster Care Wishes**
We're celebrating outstanding foster families in May! More info on pg.3
- **PRIDE and GROW trainings** are currently being held online.
For more information, visit <https://www.fcnp.org/pridegrow-training-schedules>
- **ORIENTATION DATES** for local agencies can be found on our website at: <https://www.fcnp.org/become-foster-parent/inquiry-and-orientation>
- Local **SUPPORT GROUPS** can be found at: <https://www.fcnp.org/support-group/>
- For a full list of upcoming events, visit <https://www.fcnp.org/news-events/calendar>

CELEBRATING FOSTER FAMILIES WITH 31 WISHES:

Did you know that May is National Foster Care Awareness Month? Of course we think you're wonderful and deserving of thanks and praise everyday of the year, but we want to take this opportunity to officially say...**THANK YOU!**

Thank you for the amazing love and care you share with the children and teens in your homes and for all of the time and energy you spend making sure their needs are met.

Thank you for the ways you advocate for the children and teens in your homes and your efforts to learn new ways to support and understand them.

Thank you for the days you push through when you feel like you have nothing left to give and for the days you carve out time for self-care and pampering (because, let's face it, you totally deserve it!).

Thank you for the relationships you build with birth families, the ways you support and work toward each child and teen's permanency plan, and for being brave enough to face the heartbreak that comes with saying goodbye if and when they are able to return home.

As an extra way to say **thank you**, this year we are recognizing 31 outstanding foster families by granting wishes such as family zoo memberships, outdoor toys, arts and crafts supplies, movie passes, and more!

Selected families were nominated by agency staff, friends, relatives and community members.

To learn about the families receiving awards this year, check out the [Foster Care Navigator Facebook page](#) every day in May!

WHAT YOUR LGBTQ+ FOSTER CHILD MAY WANT YOU TO KNOW:

As we look forward to PRIDE month in June, we want to take some time to reflect on some things that may be helpful to know if you have an LGBTQ+ youth in your life (or even if you don't!).

First of all, thank you for taking the time to do some reading on the topic! One mistake that people sometimes make is asking or expecting the LGBTQ+ people in their lives to bear the responsibility of educating them. This can be an especially difficult dynamic to navigate in a parent/child relationship. SO, doing your own research and finding resources to increase your understanding can be a very powerful act of love!

At the same time, it's very important to follow their lead. Just because something works well for one person doesn't mean it's the best approach for everyone (like most things, right?).

With that in mind, here are some good points to consider:

- If a child/teen has come out to you, congratulations! It's a big deal that they felt comfortable sharing that part of their identity with you, and it says a lot about the efforts you've made to establish a relationship of safety and trust.
- Trust that they are the expert of their own experience. No matter what you believe, consider first that what they're saying is true before making comments like "it's just a phase" or "you're too young to know for sure".
- Avoid "I love you no matter what" or "I love you anyway" statements. While these may be well intended, they can accidentally translate to "There's something wrong with you, but don't worry, I still love you," which can be very painful. Instead, try "thank you for sharing that with me, I love you", "how can I best support you?" and "I love getting to know the most authentic you".
- Ask them questions that show your love and interest. While it's not their responsibility to educate you, this may be something they're excited to talk to you about!
- Be honest, but be considerate. It may be an adjustment for you, but as an adult who loves and cares for them, it is your responsibility to find ways to adjust that don't burden them. Sharing that you're out of your element may be appropriate as long as the loudest message is that you love and accept them and are willing to put in the time and effort to learn. Finding a support group with other adults who can relate is not a bad idea either!

LGBTQ+ Resources

If you have an LGBTQ+ child or teen at home and are looking for more information and ways to support them, The Trevor Project's resource page is a great place to start! Visit [TheTrevorProject.org/Resources](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources).

Additionally, if the LGBTQ+ teen at home is between the ages of 13 and 19, Q Chat Space is a great place for them to participate in live, online chat-based discussions (no video or audio) with other teens. All chats are facilitated by experienced staff who work at LGBTQ+ centers around the country. Learn more at [QChatSpace.org](https://www.qchat.space).

HAPPY PRIDE!
Do you know your Pride flags?



Inclusive Pride flag with trans representation that also acknowledges the intersectionality of race and the LGBTQ+ community



Bisexual & Pansexual flags



Non-Binary & Genderqueer



Gay & Lesbian flags



Asexual & Aromantic flags

But that's not all!
Do you know of any others?

Happy Pride Month!

Wishing you love, support, and understanding in all of your relationships always.

CELEBRATING FATHER'S DAY

A Painful Reminder

[Last year's Spring publication](#) addressed how confusing holidays such as Mother's Day can be for youth in foster care. Likewise, Father's Day can be just as difficult. With the flood of advertisements, school craft projects, greeting cards, and special events, it's pretty hard to ignore. And for the child without a biological father in their life, Father's Day can be a sad and painful reminder of that void.

Talk About It

To lessen the difficulty of the day, talk to the youth placed in your home about their thoughts and feelings. Do they want to see their bio dad? Do they want to send a card, make a gift, or avoid him altogether? Do they even have a choice?

- If the dad is accessible and the child wants to acknowledge him, determine an appropriate gift. This could be a handmade card and a simple craft or spending some quality time and buying a nice gift.
- Photos of the child are always a great gift, especially if contact with dad is limited. Many practical items can be made with the child's photo imprinted on it.
- If the child's dad is not involved, Father's Day can be an opportunity to acknowledge all the men who dedicate their time and energy to loving and caring for kids. Include coaches, teachers, grandparents, and other positive male leaders. Offer a message of appreciation for their impact on the child's life.
- For some children, it might be best to find a pleasant distraction. Make it fun for the kiddos by doing activities together that they enjoy.

Father's Day is hard to ignore, so take the time to talk about it, if they're open, and find the best solution for your unique circumstances. Homes with multiple children will require a more creative approach to ensure no one feels singled out.

Foster dads deserve to be celebrated

Every good foster parent understands that they are not a replacement for birth parents but are filling a need in the child's life during a difficult time.

Some children may feel as if celebrating Father's Day with a foster dad is a betrayal to their biological father. If there seems to be a conflict for the child to celebrate two dads, try celebrating "Foster Father's Day" instead.

As a foster parent, you've already learned to be resourceful and creative. Thank you for carefully handling the hearts of children in foster care.

To view the original Father's Day publication by Avant-Garde Foster Family Agency, click [HERE](#).

To view previous newsletters, visit our website, www.fcnp.org.

MDHHS FORMS & PUBLICATIONS

Did you know that MDHHS has an entire webpage dedicated to forms and publications on topics such as Becoming a Foster Parent, COVID Resources, Foster Parent Support, and Foster Youth Resources?

Explore those resources [HERE](#) or visit Michigan.gov/MDHHS and use the "Adult & Children's Services" dropdown menu to select "Foster Care".

COFFEE FILTER FLOWER CRAFT

Supplies:

- White coffee filters
- Water-based markers
- Short cups with water
- Scissors, Clear tape
- Small sticks or twigs

How to:

1. Draw a circle on the filter where the ridged part meets the flat center.



2. Fold the coffee filter in half, then in half again, forming a cone shape. Then open the top of the cone-shaped coffee filter and rest it on the opening of the cup, with just the tip of the filter in the water. (Don't let the circle you drew touch the water!) Repeat the process with markers of different colors.



3. Let them sit for 20-30 minutes and watch what happens! Lay flat to dry. Then fasten to sticks to make your bouquet!



Click [HERE](#) or visit BuggyAndBuddy.com for more detailed instructions.



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WHAT IS A FOSTER CARE NAVIGATOR?

A Foster Care Navigator is someone who serves as a liaison between current and prospective foster parents and their agency. As trained and experienced foster parents themselves, each Navigator will mentor, through their own experience, parents navigating through the world of foster care.

The Adoptive and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention (AFPRR) program in Region 5 is a program of Judson Center and is funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about becoming a foster parent, please visit us at www.fcnp.org or call 1-855-MICH-KIDS.



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