

REGIONAL RESOURCE TEAM: REGION 4 FAMILY NEWSLETTER

June 2020

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

In April and May, the Region 4 Resource Team and Judson Center's Post Adoption Resource Center (PARC) hosted the Empowered To Connect Conference Rewind, broadcasting the 2018 conference online via Zoom. Below are links to various resources from Show Hope and Empowered to Connect.

For Practical Applications:

<https://showhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ETC-2020-Participant-Sheet.pdf>

For Recommended Resources:

<https://showhope.org/recommended-resources/>

For Situation-Specific Resources:

<https://empoweredtoconnect.org/resources/>

WHO'S TRAINING YOU?

Rachel Dochstader has been training PRIDE for about a year and a half, serving Hillsdale, Lenawee, and Monroe counties. In addition to training PRIDE, she has been a foster and adoptive parent for several years. Rachel felt compelled to foster after an extended stay in a Pediatric ICU with her biological daughter, where she learned of the need for safe foster placements for medically fragile children. While she

knew it would be years before she was in a position to bring children into her home, she understood the importance of fostering children *and* their families. Since becoming licensed five years ago, Rachel has begun working toward becoming a social worker so that she can support children and families in both her personal and professional life.



She often sees and is inspired by potential foster parents having "ah-ha" moments during trainings. The benefits of learning from one another is one reason Rachel is working with her local MDHHS office to start a local foster parent support group. She believes that supportive relationships are essential for families' success.

Rachel advises, "When you become frustrated, write a list of all the reasons you started this journey. In the bad times, it brings you back to why you started. Bring it back out in the good times to use as a measure of how well you are doing."

BECOME A TRAINER

We're looking for foster parents to join our PRIDE training team! Our foster parent trainers are personable and energetic, great storytellers and effective communicators. Parent trainers are contracted employees and can expect to work about 20-25 hours per month in the county of your choice, but foster parents who choose to train in multiple counties have an opportunity to work more hours. Trainers are expected to be currently or formerly licensed and must have a high school diploma. Trainers are also required to attend a paid four-day training to learn more about PRIDE content and classroom management skills. If you believe your experiences would benefit others, apply at:

<https://www.judsoncenter.org/careers-and-jobs/open-positions/?gnk=job&gni=8a7883a86f38cb42016f67bf20de67e7&lang=en>

FAMILY FEATURE

Denise and Jim Davies call themselves “seasoned”, and after 13 years of fostering, who wouldn’t? What began as a journey to adopt their biological grandson has grown into a very busy household with two adopted children and four foster children. Denise and Jim Davies have built a strong support network of family, friends, and community resources over the years and encourages others to do the same.

WE’RE ALL HUMAN

Being “seasoned” means Denise receives calls from workers and other foster families, seeking advice or a listening ear. During trainings and seminars, Denise tells other parents she meets to give her a call if they have any questions. Remembering what it was like when she first began fostering and didn’t have a large support network, she wants to be a source of support. Denise often offers families resources, suggestions, or contact information to connect with other foster parents who have been going through the same things. She shares that everyone has fears and reservations about taking a new placement, and she is no different since you never know what to expect.

The challenges of the unknown are one of the reasons Denise says that fostering is hard work and you must be dedicated. When discussing past placements, Denise shared, “I’ve had hard ones and I’ve had easy ones. It’s difficult because I’ve had kids that have knocked me on the floor, and I’ve had kids that cry and you have to reassure them a lot because they think you’re not coming back because that’s what they’ve known.” Denise adds that when fostering, you have to give an abundance of love. Over the years, she has learned how important it is that each child—biological, adoptive, and foster—gets the same amount of love and no one feels neglected, so she works diligently to find new and fun ways to help them believe that someone cares.

Denise shared a personal experience about children placed with her who were getting speech therapy one day a week through school. Because she felt that one day a week was not effective, she enrolled them in speech therapy outside of school two additional days a week, and the children thrived. According to Denise, people have the wrong view of foster parents if they think about fostering as a way to get rich, as they definitely spend more on the children than they receive from the daily rate. “You have to treat [foster children] like your own kids and make them feel a part of the family,” she says.

For the Davies family, treating children in foster care like part of the family often means that they are a part of the family even after reunification. Denise shared that many of their former foster children still call her “mom”, invite them to football games or plays and share school pictures. In addition, many birth parents who reunite with their children include the Davies family as an extended family of sorts, appreciating that their kids were so loved while they were apart.



“Don’t give up on the kids. The kids didn’t do anything wrong; it’s going to be hard, but don’t give up.”

– Denise Davies

UPCOMING EVENTS

- June 21st, 2020
Father's Day
- September 28th – 30th, 2020
Wraparound Conference
Traverse City, MI
- PRIDE trainings are currently being held online. Families should be referred by their licensing workers for PRIDE training. Training dates can be found on our website at:
<https://www.fcnp.org/resources/pride-training-dates/>
- Orientation dates for local agencies can be found by searching by county on our website at:
<https://www.fcnp.org/resources/orientation-dates/>.
- Local Support Groups can be found by searching by county on our website at:
<https://www.fcnp.org/support-group/>.

OUT OF THIS WORLD STORIES

If you're looking to shake up story time, check out <https://storytimefromspace.com/> to watch NASA astronauts read stories to kids while they float around in space!

MICHIGAN RESOURCE GUIDE

Did you know, we've developed a digital guide with county-specific resources for foster, adoptive and kinship families?

Follow the link to find support in your area:

<https://www.michiganresourceguide.org/>

TEEN TALK

While trying to get teens to open up can feel daunting, building a deep and consistent connection can help.

BESTLIFE has compiled a list of tips to do just that. Some of our favorites are:

- **Avoid asking “why” questions.**
Instead, ask them how or what they felt about what happened.
- **Ask what friends are doing and feeling.**
While your teen may not experience the same things as their friends, this still provides great insight into their world.
- **Talk about a time you made a mistake.**
Sharing about mistakes made and lessons learned can provide a great sense of relatability to teens.
- **Ask unexpected questions.**
Branch out from “How was school?” with specific questions such as, “What’s something that made you laugh today?”
For all “23 Ways to Get Your Teenager to Open Up to You, According to Experts,” visit: <https://bestlifeonline.com/get-teenager-to-open-up/>

A LETTER TO FOSTER PARENTS

Former foster youth, Catherine Pearson, wrote an open letter to the foster families with whom she spent her formative years. In this letter from the AdoptiveUSKids blog, Catherine shared her fears, lessons learned, and the impact foster families had into adulthood. Read Catherine's letter at: <https://blog.adoptuskids.org/letter-to-a-foster-parent/>

SUMMER ACTIVITIES

We know that summer may look a bit different this year as schools, childcare, camps, and other summer programs debate how and when to reopen. We're working diligently to keep these webpages as current as possible for families. Check in with our 'Resources' tab regularly to learn more.



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.

Contact Us:

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The Adoptive and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention program in Region 4 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, visit us at www.fcnp.org or call 855-MICH-KIDS.

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