Spring 2016

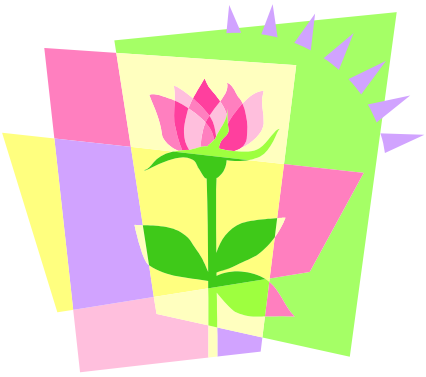
A quarterly publication of the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents, Inc.

COMMUNIQUÉ

A resource for the Connecticut foster, adoptive and kinship care community.

Happy Spring!

The board of directors and staff at the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents, Inc. would like to wish you and your family a happy and safe spring!



March is National Social Worker Month!

SOCIAL WORK PAVES THE WAY FOR change

CAFAP recognizes that Social Workers make a difference in the day-to-day lives of millions of Americans by helping to build, support and empower positive family and community relationships. For example, they work in schools helping students overcome obstacles to their education; they work in hospitals helping patients navigate their paths to recovery; and they work in agencies and organizations helping protect vulnerable children and adults from abuse and neglect.

Remember to say thank you to your Social Worker!

Are you an Experienced Foster Parent?

Are you an Experienced Relative Foster Parent?

When you were newly-licensed, do you remember all the questions you had when your first foster child came into your home?

Do you remember wondering what resources were available to you?

Do you remember thinking "if I only had another foster parent to talk to who has shared the same experience"?

If you remember all of these times, then you might enjoy being a buddy!

Support newly licensed families!

BE A BUDDY!

Training and stipend provided.

Call Wendy Sander, Buddy Coordinator at 1-800-861-8838 at CAFAP or email wendy.sander@cafap.com.

Are you interested in being a Foster Parent? An Adoptive Parent? Call 1.888.KID HERO for more information!

In this Edition…

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Happy Spring! I am certain that many of you are thankful that we had a mild winter and an early Spring.

CAFAP Liaisons are continue to assist Department of Children and Families with promoting attendance at post licensing trainings for foster and pre-adoptive parents. Please see page 5 for an important message from Commissioner Katz.

We are hard at work at planning our 21st Annual CAFAP Conference on May 13 and 14 at Foxwoods. SAVE THE DATES! Registration will open soon so watch for the E-blast soon.

As we "go to press" we about to enjoy our 7th annual Avenue of Dreams prom dress giveaway with hair, make-up, henna and photo-ops. We share our some fabulous photographs in our Summer issue.

Get ready to enjoy spring. Before you know it, summer will be here!!

Margaret Doherty

Upcoming CAFAP Event

Check www.CAFAP.com for updates

Board of Directors

Amy Kennedy
President

Cathy Gentile-Doyle
Vice President

Geralyn (Geri) Kogut
Secretary/Treasurer

Glynis Cassis
Director

Garrett (Gary) Gizowski
Director

Kevin McMahon
Director

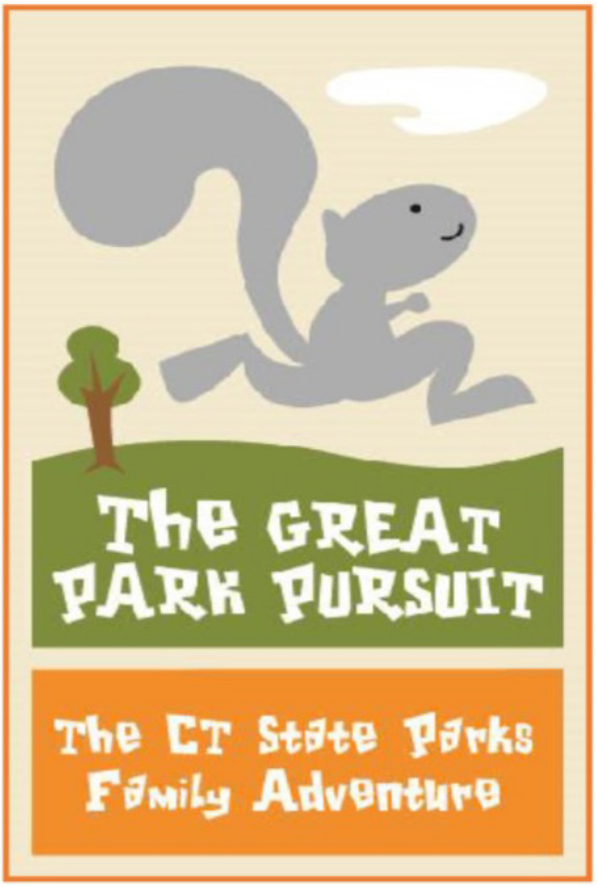
Rocio Chang-Angulo
Director

Michael Burns
Director

Communiqué is published in both the English and Spanish language four times a year by the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents, Inc. CAFAP is a non-profit organization devoted to the strengthening of foster, adoptive and relative care providers through support, training, and advocacy with the aim of nurturing child safety, well being and stability in partnership with child welfare professionals and the entire community.

If you would like to contribute information for the next edition of the Communiqué, Summer 2016, the deadline is June 10, 2016.

The Association would like to thank the Connecticut Department of Children and Families for the funding we receive.



Great Park Pursuit Kick-off!

Saturday, April 30, 2016

9 AM – 3 PM

Keney Park Pond, 323 Edgewood St. Hartford, CT

FREE!!

(and join us for 7-weeks of fun, until Saturday, June 11)

Visit one of the nation's oldest Parks, an Urban Nature Center in the heart of the city. Activities include nature hikes, scavenger hunts, habitat selfies, mini bio-blitz, arts & crafts, and more!

No registration required to come for the day. Registration is required to be eligible for the final Great Park Pursuit Prize.

For more information and to register:
www.NoChildLeftInside.org

Registration closes on Monday, April 25, 2016
Teresa.Gagnon@ct.gov
(860) 529-5816

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
79 Elm St., Hartford, CT 06106
www.ct.gov/deep
Commissioner Rob Klee

No Child Left Inside.

We would like to thank everyone at Powder Ridge in Middlefield for providing the opportunity for families to have a fun filled day of snow tubing on their mountain throughout this winter season. They were generous enough to donate day passes for us to provide. The staff were very helpful with the kids and fun was and has by all!

Powder Ridge
Mountain Park & Resort

FOSTER PARENT COLLEGE

www.fosterparentcollege.com

In accordance with the new requirements for post license trainings, Foster Parent College has identified which of their courses fit within the information guidelines for Trauma Informed and Crisis Intervention.

TRAUMA INFORMED

Caring for Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused
Explores the emotional and behavioral effects of child sexual abuse on children in care and offers strategies to help overcome the challenges foster parents face.

Child Abuse & Neglect
A pre-service course designed for individuals interested in caregiving which focuses on child maltreatment. Learn about the characteristics, symptoms and reporting standards for child maltreatment. **Caution: contains graphic images.**

Grief & Loss in the Care System
Discusses grief and loss as it impacts foster children, birth parents and foster caregivers.

Understanding Behavior in Foster Children
Explores problematic behavior in foster children and how foster parents can better understand the purpose of a child's behavior through careful observation.

CRISIS INTERVENTION

Anger Outbursts
This course covers temper tantrums, assaultive behavior towards other children, rage towards the mother, and erratic or unpredictable anger.

Anger Pie
Dr. Rick Delaney discusses how an understanding of the ABCs of behavior can help parents ward off angry outbursts.

Self-Harm
This course examines self-injury, high-risk behavior, suicidal behavior, reckless accident proneness, and hair pulling.

If you have any questions please contact your area CAFAP Liaison who will help you find the answers you need.

Important information about post license training from Commissioner Joette Katz

DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities

Joette Katz
Commissioner

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

February 3, 2016

Dear foster and adoptive parents:

You open your homes and hearts to love, care for and nurture children who need a home. For this we thank you and stand ready to support you. We have always had requirements that our foster parents take post-licensing training as part of being licensed. This is because we believe that post-licensing training provides knowledge and skills necessary to care for foster children.

As of February 1, 2016, the Department of Children and Families is making some changes to the ***requirements*** for post-licensing training of all core foster and adoptive parents. Each licensed home will be required to complete six (6) modules of training every year. One module a year must be on a topic related to trauma and one module a year must be related to crisis intervention. Every two years, you must take a CPR module.

Our staff and partners at The Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents (CAFAP) will assist you to find appropriate training so that you can meet this requirement and they will remind you when you haven't. Failure to complete the required training will result in licensing actions including, putting your home on hold at time of re-licensing, no further placements or in extreme cases a revocation of your license.

Your support staff in the Region (FASU) will be able to answer any questions that you have and will work with you to create individualized plans that will help you to complete all your training. I'm also attaching a document that provides some more details.

Thank you for being fantastic partners in this work and for providing a home for a child who needs you.

POST-LICENSING TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Each licensed foster or pre-adoptive parent shall attend six (6) modules of training a year

What is the Requirement?

6 modules per year for all CORE foster parents

- 1 module in the subject of crisis intervention (discipline, child development, positive parenting)
- 1 module in the subject of trauma
- 1 module of CPR for every two year licensing cycle

What is a Module?

- Modules are defined as topics, no matter how long, but no less than one hour
- Different topics or speakers count as separate modules
- If one topic is one hour or 3 hours, it counts as one module
- For all day conferences, foster parents may earn credit for several modules depending on the number of topics

What different ways can I get the training?

- Support groups with training
- CAFAP modules
- Foster Parent College or other online training
- Conferences or symposiums
- Other training offered in the community (get approval from your FASU SW)
- Individual in-home training with FASU Support Social Worker (DVDs, books, printed materials)

What happens if I don't meet the Requirements?

- At the time of re-licensing your home will be placed on hold
- No additional placements will be made, including respite
- An Assessment of Regulatory Compliance (ARC) will be completed which will include a plan for you to meet the requirement
- Renewal of license may be impacted by failure to complete the training requirement

What help will I get from DCF to meet the training requirements?

Your FASU Support Social Worker will:

- Let you know about trainings that you can take
- Help you find trainings that you want to take
- Create an individualized training plan for you
- Keep track of the trainings you take
- Let you know when you need to get more training to meet the requirement

6 Things I Wish You Knew About Foster Care

By Dr. John Degarmo

I admit it freely.

Before I was a foster parent, I knew very little about the foster care system. Like so many in society, I had misconceptions about what foster care was, what the children were like, and what foster parents do. Now, after 13 years of caring for children in foster care, and over 50 children through my own home, I continue to find that even my own family members and friends do not understand what it is truly like. Here are 6 things I want you to know about what it is truly like.

1. It's Not Their Fault

Perhaps the biggest misconception about children in foster care is that the children are somehow at fault. When I was much younger, I had this same false belief, that children in foster care were bad kids, and that they did something wrong.

Yet, this is so far from the truth. These are children who are the victims. These are children who are suffering. Children suffering from abuse. Neglect. Malnutrition. Even drug-related problems passed on from a mother's addiction. Children rejected by those who were to love them most, their parents. When placed into a foster home, many of these children carry with them the physical and emotional scars that prevent them from accepting the love of another.

2. We Are Not Saints.

I often hear, on a weekly basis, that my wife and I are saints for caring for children in need, and opening up our homes and hearts to kids in foster care. In no way, and in no fashion am I a saint, and I believe that foster parents from all over would echo that sentiment. We are not saints. We become tired, worn down, and exhausted. We have our own frustrations and disappointments. There are times when we succeed, and there are times when we experience failures. We are not the perfect parents. We are simply trying our best to provide a home and family for a child who needs one, and help a child in need.

3. It Does Hurt

It seems that the comment that is made to me the most by those who are not foster parents is this; "I could not do what you do. It would hurt too much to give the children from foster care back." As one who has cared for over 50 children in my own home the past 13 years, as well as traveling the country speaking about the foster care system, the question is one that I hear several times a week. My response is this; "That's a good thing. It is supposed to hurt. Your heart is supposed to break!" To be sure, children in foster care need stability and they need security. Yet, what they need the most is to be loved. As foster parents, we might the first adults who have ever loved the child in a healthy and unconditional fashion. Sadly, for some children, we may be the only adults who will ever love the child in this fashion, in an unconditional manner. So, when the child leaves our home and our family, our hearts should break. We should experience feelings of grief and loss. After all, we have given all of our hearts and love to a child in need.

4. We Can't Save Them All

No, we cannot.

I understand that. I have been told this by friends and family, alike, as they question why I continue to bring children into my home, and into my family.

Yet, it is like the familiar Starfish story.

A father and son were walking along a beach at sunrise after a huge storm. When they stepped onto the beach, they were met with thousands of starfish, littering the beach, hundreds in each direction. The boy bent down and picked up a starfish, throwing it far into the ocean. Again and again, he repeated the action. After watching his son for some time, the father asked, “Son, what are you doing?”

“I’m throwing these starfish back into the ocean,” the young boy answered.

“I see. But why are you doing this?” the father asked.

“When the sun comes out, and starts warming up the beach, the starfish will all die. I have to throw them back into the water.”

“But son, you can’t save all of these starfish. You can’t possibly make a difference.”

The boy stopped for a moment to take in his father’s words, then bent down, and picked up another starfish in his hand, before throwing it as far as he could back into the ocean. Turning to his father with a large grin spreading across his face, he simply said, “It made a huge difference for that one!”

And it can make a huge difference for each child from foster care we bring into our home.

5. Working with Birth Family.

Our foster child wants nothing more than to return home to his family. In fact, reunification is often the end goal for most foster children. As a foster parent, part of our mission is to support reunification with our foster child and his biological parents. What is important to consider, as well, is that many biological parents of foster children were abused themselves, and know of no other way when raising children. Also disturbing is that some birth parents were foster children, as well, and are just repeating the cycle they went through as a child. Certainly, there are reasons why their children are in care that we may never understand. Part of being a foster parent is helping the parents of the children living with us; helping our fellow human beings.

6. The Hardest and Most Important Job

Being a foster parent is often the hardest thing we do. After all, each time a new foster child comes into our families, there are new challenges, as each placement is unique, just as the child is, as well. Every placement will be different from each other, and it will not become routine, some placements may even be unsettling. We do not have a “normal” life style, to be sure, and we make many sacrifices as we bring children in need, and in trauma into our family.

Yet, we are changing lives, while our own lives are being changed. There is a good chance that in the future, the foster child we cared for may not remember our names. There is a good chance that in the future, the foster child we care for may not remember our faces. But for so many children in foster care, each foster child who comes through our homes will remember one thing; that for a period in his life, he was loved, and some day down the road, he will blossom into something better because of it.

And we will be better because of the child, as well.

Born in 1969, leading foster care expert Dr. John DeGarmo has worn many hats throughout his life. Singing and dancing while touring around the world in the international super group, Up With People, serving as a D.J. at four different radio stations on two different continents, working in the professional wrestling industry, teaching English and Drama at the high school level, and working as a media specialist at two different schools, Dr. DeGarmo has had a variety of experiences.