



CHEROKEE COUNTY FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATION

From The President

Our family event was fun, we watched "Planet 51" and the food was good. Everyone pitched in and the Popcorn machine was fun for the kids. We would love for more of our Foster Parents to join us at these events. Everyone has a good time and we all get to talk to each other and visit. We are working on our next Family event for October so be on the look out for what will be coming up.

Our next conference is scheduled for November 13th at the Antioch Christian Church, our topic will be on the financial side. Edward Jones, a Tax advisor & RBC Bank will be teaching us how to best use our money and how to take advantage of tax breaks for Foster Parents.



Cherokee County Foster Adoptive & Parent Association

August 2010

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Featured Event for September 25th

"Give Me A Break" event will be at the Woodstock Recreation Center gym. It will be from 10:30am - 3:30pm. Lunch will be provided for the kids. The children always have lots of fun and they get to run around and play.

Featured Event for August 14th

The afternoon session **"Tough Talk to Tender Hearts"** was very informative to those in attendance. We learned about how to talk to our children about sex and how important it is to be able to talk about sex in an honest manner.

Here is some of the information we discussed: Talking to kids about sex is tough for most parents. Adoptive parents, however, often have additional tough topics to discuss when addressing sexuality with their children, such as adoptive parents' infertility, birthparents who engaged in premarital sex, and more.

First and foremost, it is paramount to understand the effects of trauma on the child's life. The loss of being separated from birth family presents trauma for all adopted children. In addition, many adopted children experience additional trauma - the loss of their culture or country; effects of being abused emotionally, physically, and/or sexually; and/or effects of pre-natal trauma, such as birthmother's drug and alcohol use during pregnancy. This trauma may impact a child's development so it is not uncommon for adopted children to function at a lower developmental age than their typically-developing peers. As parents, we need to know our children's developmental age in order to address sexuality in an appropriate manner.

Because a child's adoption story is so closely linked to reproduction, parents of adopted children have no choice but to teach their children early on about sexual issues according to Communicating with the Adopted Child by Miriam Komar. However, parents should always take into

account the child's developmental age when talking about sexuality.

For children at the pre-school level developmentally, it is suggested that you use phrases such as, "There are two ways families are formed" and "You were born to another woman and man, and we adopted you, and you became part of our family." Children at this level are often aware of pregnant women and may express sadness that their adoptive mom did not give birth to them. The following books are great in discussing with children at this level: Twice-Upon-A-Time: Born and Adopted by Eleanor Patterson and Mommy Did I Grow in Your Tummy?: Where Some Babies Come From by Elaine Gordon. By the time children are at the 7- to 12- year-old developmental level, most parents are able to talk openly about sexuality. One book you can use is 'It's So Amazing! A Book about Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies, and Families' by Robie Harris. This cartoon book covers basic anatomy, conception, fetal development, and birth. It also covers adoption, same sex parents, in vitro fertilization, masturbation, sexual abuse and HIV in nonjudgmental ways.

During the pre-teen years, youth become more sexually aware and begin to demonstrate their sexual attraction to others. Youth are usually taught sex education in the schools, and they are exposed to more about sex through the media.

Parents should not assume one discussion about the "birds and the bees" is enough. Parents need to talk with children at different developmental stages about sex because children's perceptions change over time. The suggested way to open communication about sex is through books and popular media, such as news stories and movies. You can also talk about other kids' activities, such as "Tell me about what's going on at school. I hear Joe and Susie are going out. How do you feel about that?"

When children become adolescents, they often begin to ask many difficult questions about their adoption stories - questions parents may not have answers to. Their sexual identity is forming, and they are often wondering if their birthparents' sexual behaviors define them. They want to know how alike and different they are from their two sets of parents and are often confused how to accomplish this in the absence of their birthparents.

Research shows that adopted teens are at greater risk for pregnancy because they want to "undo" their biological parent's relinquishment or want their own biological connection.

The challenge is to impart our values about sexual behavior without judging the birthparents..

Teens need their parents' guidance about a lot of tough issues regarding sexuality. Parents need to address masturbation - what's okay, where, when, etc., according to your family values. Many teens show an interest in pornography. We need to define what's okay and what's not okay, and set limits and supervision. Be aware that kids watch us; if we are squeamish when they mention sex, they may feel they can't trust us with their questions.

Written by: Erica Zito

Foster Parents Often Foster the Whole Family



When doing foster care, we are given many opportunities to gain a connection to the child's family. How we choose to use these opportunities makes the difference between fostering a child and fostering a family. I've met grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other family members both before and after visits. Remember that these family members are experiencing a great loss, as well. They often do not get the visitation time that parents are offered. Listen to what they have to say, if you're comfortable with the conversation. I've taken time with parents and other extended family members to jot down genealogy and later added that information to the children's life books. One grandfather related his WWII stories. This is a great way to help instill pride in the children's birth families, and to build a sense of self-esteem and identity within the child.

The holidays bring a great opportunity for forming a connection with the family. Consider taking a gift to the parents. I usually get the child's picture taken for Christmas, and then bring the frame photo to the parents. I also include an envelope with several different pictures in a variety of sizes, which parents can keep for themselves or choose to give to extended family. Additionally, I like to frame a smaller size photo, like a 5" x 7", for grandparents at Christmas time.

Another idea is purchasing a small scrapbook, into which you can just slip photos. This makes a great gift, and the parents seem to enjoy the candid pictures. If you are uncomfortable giving a gift, a simple card is a nice gesture.

Remember that the goal of fostering is almost always reunification of the family. In most cases, this is best for all involved. By fostering these connections with the parents and building a relationship of trust, foster parents begin to mentor a whole family instead of fostering one child. Parents may then be willing to ask of you, the foster parents, parenting questions or advice. And, when the child goes home, the parents will have you as another resource to lean upon while they work to rebuild their lives. This is, hopefully, a relationship that will last between your two families for some time to come. Your efforts to foster the whole family and build trust, will give the child the opportunity to have several people in his/her life that care for him/her. ~ By Carrie Craft

A Recipe for a Perfectly Blended Family

- Combine families and traditions
- Enfold love
- Stir in a heaping measure of crazy schedules
- Add feelings and strain
- Chill with patience and respect
- Mix in honest communication (do not substitute ESP)
- Pour on fun and experiences
- Mix together, until 'his' and 'hers', and 'others' become 'ours'

Yield: One New, Strong blended family

Message from D'Anna

It may sound ironic, but when leaders put their families first, the community benefits. Starting at home is always the key to affecting others in a positive way. When you set your priorities and lead your household, your credibility inside and outside your home is strengthened. Put your family first in your leadership. There's no legacy like that of the positive influence leaders can exercise with their family. ~from the 21 Most Powerful Minutes in a Leader's Day

These words remind me that you are leaders in your families and in this community as Foster Parents. The role of a Foster Parent should not be taken lightly and especially not for granted. I value each of you for your leadership role in your home and the role you play in this community as a Cherokee County Foster Parent. Thank You for making this life changing decision to open your homes for children who need love, support and stability in the home.

We took custody of 7 children in July; 4 girls and 3 boys. 3 of these children were ages 0-5; 2 were from 6-12; and 2 were 13 and over. All of these children were white. 5 of these children were placed in Cherokee DFCS foster homes; 1 was placed in a private agency foster home (Child Placing Agency); and 1 was placed with a non-relative family friend. There was 1 sibling group of 2. There were 2 re-entries of young teens - 1 child's aftercare was disrupted when the protective order was violated causing the child to re-enter care and another child's mother's situation became too unstable financially and in other ways. 2 of these children came from CPS Investigations; 1 came from Family Preservation; 3 children came from direct orders from juvenile court. None of these children were returned at the 72-hour or 10-day hearings.

We had 15 children exit foster care in July for reasons of emancipation, reunification and custody to a relative. When July ended, we had 142 children in foster care. This is the lowest number of children in care that we have experienced in many years! There were no finalized adoptions in July, but we have plans for 2 finalizations in August!

We currently have 78 family foster homes. We added 5 approved home in June and experienced 3 homes that closed. One home closed due to a finalized adoption and the other 2 homes closed for voluntary reasons.

Regarding State Office updates, the DHS FY2011 Furlough Plan is forthcoming. You may have read in the Atlanta Journal that the Governor is asking for budgets reflecting 4%, 6%, and 8% cuts from all state agencies. At this time we are meeting the 4% cut with no new positions being approved. This means we are unable to fill existing vacancies and are going to have to work closely together. We will probably need to move staff as needed to cover the work we have to do. This may impact who your assigned worker is for the child, so I wanted you to be aware of the challenges we are facing. At least for now, there is no consideration on more than one furlough day each month, but we are preparing that this could change. We have received notice that Friday, August 20 and Friday, September 3 will be Furlough days statewide for DHS.

Please remember that during closures, our On-Call system is in operation and we will still be available to respond to any complaints of child abuse or neglect or concerns from you. To reach our on-call staff member, please contact Non-Emergency 911 at 678-493-4080.

Regarding other budgetary concerns, our direct program budgets have been cut and we are being more selective in our use of Wrap-Around and Family Preservation funding. As a foster parent, you will be asked to provide transportation to and from doctor visits as opposed to paying a provider through these funds. As you are asked about these request, please be mindful of our requests as we work together to support our children.

The Partnership Parenting initiative is slowly rolling out statewide and our Region is not scheduled to begin training on this until after the first of the New Year. The goal of Partnership Parenting is to bridge communication and relationship gaps between children and their parents and between birth and foster parents or other care givers.

I would like to plan another Roundtable event where your input can be gained as well as interaction with each other and our staff. Please let me, Marie Blackwell and/or Amy Blanton know your thoughts on how we can accomplish this given everyone's schedules. I feel the time spent together is valuable and we all can learn from each other in these type settings. I appreciate the feedback as this information helps create a stronger partnership between us. You can email me at: dkliber@dhr.state.ga.us

Thank you again for your valuable service to the children and families.

D'Anna Liber
Director
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Cherokee County Foster Adoptive & Parent Association



Building The Future with our Foster and Adoptive Parents as they open their hearts & their homes to children.

Check website calendar for upcoming events & training.

www.fosteroradopt.org



If you would like to receive the newsletter via email go to our web site and signup.

If your email changes let us know so that we can update our records.

Check us out on **Facebook**, many of our foster parents are connecting via the net. Click link below or put "Cherokee County Foster" to find us.

<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?sid=9337e82e1d11a302dc6636ebf8cd44e4&eid=75644102307&ref=search>

2010 Board Members

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Other Associations or Support Foundations

Foster Care Support Foundation

located at 115 Mansell Place, Roswell, Ga. 30076, 770-641-9591,

<http://www.fostercares.org>

Email: Rachel Ewald rachel@fostercares.org

Embrace Cherokee

Foster Parent Liaison Amy Blanton, amy.blanton@embracega.org

or visit them on the web <http://www.embracega.org>

AFPAG (State Foster Parent Association)

Feel free to contact them at: contactafpag@bellsouth.net

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