

# NEWS FROM YOUR PEER LIAISON



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## 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!

## Helping Children in Care Cope During the Holidays

The holidays are coming! Besides a full belly and an empty wallet, what does that mean? For the children in our care, it means some developmental grieving. This is something that is discussed in PS-MAPP class during Meeting 3. Developmental grieving is when children go back through the grieving process due to milestones in their lives (holidays, prom, birthdays, etc.) because they are not with their birth family for these events. If a child in your care is behaving in a way that is not typical for them, ask yourself if that child could be experiencing developmental grieving. A few ways to help the developmental grieving process:

- Have everyone go around the room and share a memory they have of a past holiday (Thanksgiving or Christmas).
- Don't push the child to talk about their birth family, if they share a memory from school that is okay!
- Help the child work on their lifebook.
- Ask the child what their favorite food is from each holiday and then make it for them.
- Make sure not to cancel therapy appointments during the holidays no matter how busy your schedule gets.
- Last but not least, take care of YOU! You need to be at your best to help them through this difficult time.

This can be a tough time for kids in care. If the children have not experienced a holiday with you, it can be overwhelming to have so many places to go, so much food to eat, so many relatives they have never met, and so many presents to unwrap. (Remember the *Imaginary Journey* and opening the door to all of those new faces...or the *First Day* roadwork from PS-MAPP?) Keep in mind that what is "normal" for you is very foreign to them. If a child is having behaviors, they are likely not trying to ruin the holiday spirit, but rather are expressing feelings of being overwhelmed or anxious.



## DATES ON DECK

- Saturday, January 16 (9 AM-12:15 PM) **Calming the Trauma Storm**, at Stoney Creek Inn, Sioux City.
- Saturday, January 16 (1:15 PM-4:30 PM) **When Old Parenting Strategies Don't Work! Help us Please!** At Stoney Creek Inn, Sioux City.
- Saturday, January 30, (9 AM-12:15 PM) **Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter** at ICCC East Campus, Fort Dodge.
- Saturday, January 30 (1:15PM-5:30PM) **CPR & First Aid** at site TBA, Fort Dodge. (you need to pre-register with IFAPA for this class)

And, don't forget, if it has been three years since you took an approved **CPR & First Aid** training or five years since you took your **Mandatory Child Abuse** training, you will need to complete these before you can be re-licensed. If you can't remember, touch base with your IKN or DHS licensing workers; they will know!

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

## DECEMBER 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!

- **20+ Years:** Tony & Deborah Beam
- **5+ Years:** Sandra & Donald Stehr; Jeanette & Neal Keairns; Charles & Josie Weier; Justin & Bobbie Sue Onken

## HEADS UP! EYES & EARS OPEN!

*REMINDER: As you get a new placement, you should be signing an "Agreement and Consent for Activities of a Child in Foster Care" form. Let me know if you need more info.*

*And as part of a new federal law, foster parents are now required to complete a Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Training by September 30, 2016. In order to complete this requirement, IFAPA has created a training video which is available on our website. It takes about 30 minutes to complete and you just as well get it done before next fall!*

*AND, tis the season for emotions to run wild; Step back, take a deep breath, relax your body and then respond. Everyone will be thankful you this!*

**MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM IFAPA JOHN**



## From My Side of the Desk!

“Christmas is coming and the goose is getting fat!” I am not too sure about the goose, but as I step on the scale, I am seeing numbers that I haven't seen before.

Sure, this is a cute Christmas song and maybe what I am saying is kind of funny, but the obesity in our children is overwhelming. I met a child this past weekend who told me how much he weighed before coming into foster care and how he couldn't walk the two blocks to school without stopping a couple of times to rest. He talked about being a couch potato, eating chips and drinking pop! Sometimes I think that as parents we can let kids be in the other room watching TV/surfing the internet and munching away. Let's make sure that during the upcoming Christmas break, we limit the tube time and Christmas candies and make sure the kids get up and out!

**AND REMEMBER:** I am just an email/phone call away. I am here for you! If you 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**