

April 2010



# Newsletter

Valuing Identity, Promoting Advocacy and  
Mobilizing Community  
to better serve children and families  
in the foster care system.

(810) 936-5702 [www.ifosterhope.com](http://www.ifosterhope.com)

## Foster/Kinship Parent Support Group

Friday, April 23 6:00-8:00pm

### Ignite Flint Church

4510 S. Dort Hwy Flint, MI 48507 (corner of Dort & Hemphill)

**Refreshments and Great Conversation!**

**Free Child Care available!**

*(please call to reserve) 810-936-5702*

Current Series:

### **How to Be a Great Foster Parent** **Session 1: Great Foster Parents Work as Part of a Professional Team**



Most people become foster parents because they truly care about the children within the foster care system and most people want to be the best foster parents they can possibly be. We hope you will participate in this series on the issues we believe are the most important in order to be a great foster parent. This series is set up for you to go through one session each month.

#### **What You'll Learn This Session:**

1. What the foster care team is and what roles great foster parents play within the team.
2. How to maintain professionalism within the team.
3. How your documentation helps the team with decisions.

#### **What will my kids do while I am in the support group?**

We are working on all kinds of fun activities for the kids. As this group grows, we are looking forward to providing activities by age, including life book scrapbooks and teen support groups.

# Meeting with a Social Worker

Here are tips to keep in mind when working with your foster child's social worker:

## 1. Dress like a professional

I try to wear something that is nice, but wouldn't intimidate the birth parents, with whom I am trying to build a relationship. A good pair of jeans, a button-up shirt, and dressier shoes looks great for most meetings.

## 2. Doctor's Information

Bring medical information to meetings with the social worker so that he/she can update their files.

- If you don't know who the child's primary health care provider is, bring a list of the doctors your family uses or the ones you will be using for the child. Don't forget about the Optometrist, as well as the Dentist.
- Be sure to have all of the doctors' names, addresses, and phone numbers written out.
- If an appointment has already been scheduled, bring your calendar with

the dates of these planned appointments. Sometimes the social workers like for the birth parents to accompany foster parents to the child's appointments.

- If you've already had the child in to see the doctor, be sure that you've had the proper forms filled out by the doctor and that you bring the forms with you to the meeting.

## 4. School information

Again, bring the following so that the social workers are up to date on all of the child's educational information.

- Include the address and the phone number of the school.
- Know the child's grade, teacher's name, and whether the child has an IEP (Individual Education Plan) for special education, speech therapy, or behavioral/ emotional issues.
- If the child has an IEP bring it to the meeting.

- Bring the school calendar to inform the workers of school programs, conferences, and other school events that the birth parents may be interested in attending.

## 5. Other Needs

Be open in sharing any questions or concerns you may have. Voice your concerns in a helpful and caring tone. Meetings are a perfect opportunity to ask about the following:

- Does the child need to be tested for special services at school?
- Does he/she need to be evaluated for therapy?
- Do you think another mentor in his life, like a Big Brother or Big Sister, would be of a benefit?
- If the parent visitation is set up during the school day - how has that been working?
- This is also the time to ask permission for the child to participate in a dance class, sports, or scouting, if you have time for these activities in your schedule.

**Do you know who has made an outstanding effort to Value Identity, Promote Advocacy or Mobilize the Community to better serve children and families in the foster system? We want to hear about it!**

Nominations can include foster parents, relative caregivers, law enforcement, child protective service workers, foster care workers both state and private agency, attorneys, CASA advocates and community volunteers.

Three Foster Hope Awards will be given – **Identity Award** for outstanding Foster/Kinship Parent – **Advocacy Award** for outstanding worker within the Foster Care System – **Community Award** for outstanding community volunteer.

Nominations forms are available at [www.ifosterhope.com](http://www.ifosterhope.com) and are due by May 15<sup>th</sup>.

Winners will be announced at the Foster Hope Carnival on May 23<sup>rd</sup>.





Care Kits were created especially for Foster Children coming into care. They are full of new or gently used clothing and personal care items. They are affordable and available for pickup anytime, even after hours and on the weekends.

**Contact Foster Hope**  
**(810) 936-7502**  
**carekits@ifosterhope.com**

### **INFANT** Care Kits contain:

3 pair of PJ's  
3 pair of socks  
Diapers/Wipes  
Bibs/bottles  
3 outfits  
3 onesies  
1 sweatshirt or coat  
Plus More!!!

### **CHILDREN/ YOUTH** Care Kits contain:

2 pair of PJ's  
3 pair of socks  
3 pair undies  
1 pair shoes  
3 shirts  
3 pants  
1 sweatshirt or coat  
Plus More!!!

## **6 – Five Minute Bonding Activities**

By Carrie Craft, About.com

These activities are not for every foster parent or every foster child. Only do what is comfortable for you and your foster child.

### **Keep in mind:**

- Child's Age - Chronological and Emotional
- Child's History of Abuse and/or Neglect
- Comfort Levels

**Please note** that I'm not promoting these activities as a way to create an instant bond between you and your child. Bonding is a process that takes time. These activities are ideas that will help start the process of bonding.

### **1. Brushing Hair**

This can be a great and easy way to spend time with a child. It also involves a safe touch, which is so important to creating a loving bond.

### **2. Read a Story**

Not only will you be increasing your bond by spending time together, you'll be increasing the child's vocabulary and other literary skills.

### **3. Sing Songs**

We used to have a tradition of singing songs before tucking our daughter into bed, favorites included Old Macdonald, London Bridge, and many different Sunday School songs. Also try songs like "This Little Piggy" where each line of the song is sang as you tickle a toe, involves appropriate, safe touching with a child who may be fearful of touch due to past abuse.

### **4. Staring Contest**

Maintain direct eye contact, the first person to look away or blink loses. A fun game for older children and a great way to have eye contact which helps build attachment. Be sure the child does not interpret this activity as threatening or intimidating and understands that it is a game.

### **5. Hand Games**

More safe touching activities like Rock Paper Scissors, Bubble Gum Bubble Gum in a Dish, or Thumb Wrestling. Some of the above links will take you to pages filled with more game ideas.

### **6. Paint Finger and Toe Nails**

More appropriate for girls - this is a sweet way to spend five minutes. Consider allowing the child to paint your nails.



# Crim Kids Classic

**Saturday, May 15**

The Crim Kids Classic offers families a day of fun and fitness. This children's event is held at the Flint Cultural Center in conjunction with National Museum Day. For Children, Ages 0-12

- Participate in the Diaper Dash, Toddler Trot, Quarter Mile, Half Mile or One Mile race.
- Every child is a winner, receiving a Crim Kids Classic T-shirt, goody bag and medal at the finish line.
- Fun for the whole family with exhibits and activities focusing on health and fitness.
- Free admission to the Cultural Center attractions.



# Tie Pals = Outdoor Fun!

I needed a toy that would be easy to throw and safe to catch, I remembered that I still had some really ugly ties — ties that I actually wore when I was younger. I filled the end of one with dry split peas, decorated it as a friendly snake, and the first Tie Pal was born. (Patrick Baumann)

## Materials

- 1 necktie
- 1/2 cup of dry split peas
- Hot-glue gun
- Needle and thread
- Googly eyes, felt, ribbons, and other decorations

## Instructions

1. Make an opening in the seam of the tie 6 inches or so from the large end and pour the split peas down into the tip.
2. To keep the peas from shifting around, seal off the end of the tie with a line of glue (insert your gun into the opening you made) or sew across the width of the tie. Glue the seam back together, as

well as any other openings that would allow the peas to escape.

3. Use hot glue, googly eyes, felt, and other materials to create a snake face.

## Games to Play:

### Tie Pal Catch

Roll up the Tie Pal in your hands and toss it underhand to a friend about 20 feet from you. Toss it in a large arc so the tail can unwind and flow through the air. After you catch the Tie Pal, take 1 step back. See how far you can get from your friend and still catch it.

### Tie Bowl

Arrange 6 empty pop bottles in a V. Step back about 20 feet and wind up the Tie Pal, releasing it just above the ground so that it sails forward toward the pins. See how many you can knock down in 2 throws.

# The Story of Foster Hope

It all began with a promise to each other that the doors of our home would always be open to those in need.



Twelve years later, we have had the privilege of adopting two teens and fostering nine children.

Looking in to the eyes of these children and their families, we have come to know three things to be true. First, the foster system is not, and cannot be, effective in meeting their needs. There are many reasons, but most of them stem from a lack of money and people. Second, countless children and families will continue to suffer until the community joins together to help fill the system's gaps. Third, these children and their families are valuable. Though many of them have made mistakes, some seemingly unforgiveable, we believe that it is in this most vulnerable state, that the greatest change can happen.

For us, it all came down to a moment in time that we realized that we needed to choose – either stand by, complaining and wishing things would change, or do something about it. It was at that moment the Foster Hope project began.

We are just ordinary people, working to connect our community to make an extraordinary difference in the lives of those in need. Thank you for joining with us on this journey!

**Tennison & Ginelle Barry**