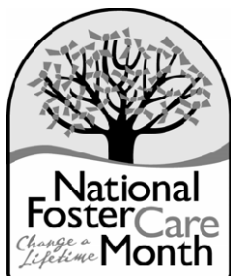




Fostering Across Wisconsin

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Foster Care Month!



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May is National Foster Care Month. It is a time of year when we put extra emphasis on recruiting new families and appreciating the ones we have. We take time to hold up and revere youth who, despite challenges in their childhood, overcame the obstacle of being a child in the foster care system.

In 2005, Governor James Doyle put resources aside to create the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center (FCARC). In creating FCARC, the State of Wisconsin made the commitment to expand the spirit of National Foster Care Month beyond May.

As we reflect on where we have come in four years and where we would like to go, we are grateful for all who have supported us along the way.

We are thankful for the:

- Continued support of our mission from Governor Doyle and the Department of Children and Families.
- Families who gave us compliments and advice to help us better meet their needs.
- Social workers who shared their needs and frustrations with us and allowed us to assist them.
- Youth who continue to give us the inspiration to keep finding new ways to support the foster care system.

In 2007, we asked people to write appreciation statements, and we were overwhelmed with the responses we received. This year we chose to do the same and again we are delighted to find people, who despite their busy schedules, took the time to appreciate others they have encountered in the foster care system. The following pages represent a sample of the statements we have received. If you'd like to see all of the statements, visit our website at wifostercareandadoption.org or call us at 1-800-947-8074 to request a copy.

Live Deeper. Love Wider. Leave Bigger. Become a Foster Parent.



Ellen Cook (of Ellen Cook Photography), is a Blessing. She made me feel like a princess. She did my make-up and also took pictures of my Nana and me!"

Erika, age 18, youth in care (In reference to her participation in the Volunteer Photography Program for her senior pictures).

I would just like to say that as a supervisor of Child and Family Services in rural Wisconsin, I am continuously in awe of the sacrifices our foster families make. It is a person

of rare strength, kindness and inner beauty who cares for the most vulnerable in our society. Foster parents fit this bill, giving up their time, comfort and resources to show compassion not only for children, but their parents as well. Child and family services simply would fail without foster parents and no other group deserves more appreciation. Thank you so much for all you do.

Dawn Buchholz, Waushara County HS



In our experience, the effects of being involved with foster care touches *everyone*. In the little bit of care that Bev and I have given, we noticed that everyone benefits: the cared-for children, the cared-for adults in those families, the caregivers themselves, and our children. I mention our children, even though our children are older and not even living at home anymore. We have noticed a few of their positive comments from time to time, and that "doing something good for others feeling" does rub off.

When we just take a minute to look at life's big picture, with the rotten economy, long hours of work, perhaps low pay, perhaps no pay/no job, etc. and then compare that to some of the families' situations that we've seen, we come away thinking

"we haven't got it so bad!" It's all perspective, and I feel lucky to be able to think that we can make a little difference here and there.

Murray Schomburg
(And Bev. And Abbey the dog)



I appreciate having fantastic visitation workers who are GREAT at their jobs. The children are genuinely excited to see them each week, and I can rest assured that they're safe and happy.

Aimee Guzman,
Foster and Adoptive Parent



I want to thank all of the foster families who not only provide unconditional care, education and their homes with foster children, but also include the child's natural family in the process.

Mark A. Maglior CSW
Waupaca County DHHS

I try to think of the impact that each foster child can make in the life of everyone they touch with their lives. I imagine the potential of every life they could impact as adults. I add in the commitment and impact that every foster parent, social worker, attorney, CASA volunteer and judge bring to the mix –and it all adds up to a sum too vast to calculate in any monetary terms.

In lives impacted, it is so vast that I am unable to comprehend it. To every one of you, my hope is that all of our dreams come true that all these impacts are not wasted.

Colleen M. Ellingson, CEO
Adoption Resources of Wisconsin

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I was in the “program” (foster care) for two years. I started at my aunt and uncles and hated it. I was later placed with Chris and Mari.

I finally understood what it meant to be loved and care for by someone genuinely. They were very supportive and are still a major part of my life, helping me when it is needed. They are directly responsible for me living a good lifestyle (out of trouble, that is).

I am currently starting a career in the National Guard. They still support and unconditionally love me and reassure me that I will be missed.”

K.S., former youth in care

I marvel at the flexibility and graciousness with which foster care providers manage abrupt changes to their lives, keeping focused on the safety and care of the foster children in their homes. Thanks to all of you for sharing your lives and homes. I am grateful.

Mary Kay Vincent-Samet, Social Worker III
Sheboygan County Division of Social Services



I am moved by the resiliency and fortitude displayed by the youth that I assist in moving towards independent living. I feel humbled in knowing how they have moved through and survived the adversity in their lives.

Marybeth Wilk, Senior Social Worker,
Dane County Dept. of Human Services



We truly appreciate all the caseworkers whom assisted and allowed our family to provide foster care, and to receive the gift of our

forever daughter, without the foster care system that wouldn't have been possible.

Also we appreciate, our daughter, for loving us, no matter if we sing out of tune or dress unfashionable.

Jason & Lisa, adoptive family



- The workers are responsive and good to work with.
- The lead worker does a really good job. She takes control and does what she says she is going to do.
- The agency is working with foster parents & parents on developing relationships that support shared or co-parenting and mentoring.

Comments from some Juneau County foster parents



Being a Foster Mom is just something I was put on this Earth for, almost like a job that God has assigned me to do. Life wouldn't be as rewarding as it is, without our foster children.

Social Workers are a Godsend. They make our lives easier! I don't quite know what we would do without them.

Sarah J. Jisko, Foster Parent
Portage County

While in the foster care system, I've had the opportunity to experience some things positive and negative but at the end of the day, I wouldn't change my situation being in the system made me tougher and stronger. I had to fend for myself and learn about life on my own. I had minimal help but for the most part, I taught myself my own values and the importance of self-reliance. I am proud to say that I am a foster child.

Johnathan,
former youth in care

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I would like to recognize four people for foster care month: **Mike Heath, Chris Lenske, Jonelle Brom and Marybeth Wilk** for all of the hard work that they have put in to caring and getting to know the youth who are, or were, in care. I have been able to work with them through the Youth Advisory Council (YAC). Even though they have to give up their weekends, drive a ways to come to our meetings and sit with us for hours while we figure out the next steps we want to take, they always seem like they want to be there.

There is nothing that the YAC members and I appreciate more than the time that they dedicate to us and the sincerity and friendship we find from them. I want to thank Chris, Mike, Jonelle and Marybeth for taking the time to get to know me and the other youth, because most people wouldn't, and also for believing in us and helping us meet our goal of changing the foster care system for the better. We couldn't do it without all of your support!

Heidi Bronsdon,
former youth in care

Thank you foster parents for opening your homes and lives to children and youth who need a safe, supportive place. I admire you for taking action and "doing something" rather than standing aside and hoping someone else will. It's been my privilege to work with and learn from you.

Cathy Rhutasel, Foster Care Coordinator
Portage County Health and Human Services



My husband and I really appreciate the support that we get from the case worker and Foster Care Coordinator. As new foster parents I sometimes worry about calling too often, having too many questions and just taking up too much of their time but we don't get that impression from them at all. It really helps us through the rough days knowing that they are really there to support us and to remind us that we are doing a good job.

Christy Frank, Foster Parent
Jefferson County

Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parents' Association (WFAPA)

WFAPA provides great opportunities to get together with other foster parents through its Spring and Fall conferences. They also have an extensive website and network of supportive WFAPA members and other foster parents who can be a resource for you.

The Fall conference will be held on October 23-25 in Rice Lake.

For more information, go to: <http://wfapa.org>

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Services Provides: Resource Library · Phone Support · Networking/Outreach

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