

FALL  
2013

STATE OF CONNECTICUT REGION 2  
FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTIVE SERVICES UNITS

# Fall News Letter

Licensed Care Providers supported by the New Haven and Milford DCF Offices



## *Families come in all different packages*

People begin their foster care journey in different ways. Some have always known that they want to be a foster parent – they feel called to care for children. Some are called upon to help out a family member who needs someone to care for their child while they try to get their life back on track. Others are moved by a media announcement outlining a child in need. Every beginning is unique in its own way.

Seven years ago two month old Khalid and his mother were homeless. Khalid's mother tried really hard to provide a stable life for her little family but finding herself unable, unemployed and destitute she entered a homeless shelter where she met Ashley, the shelter's Child Development Specialist. Blonde haired, blue eyed Ashley, a bubbly 20 year old with a love of children and a positive, upbeat attitude made Khalid's mom feel hopeful about the future.

Khalid's mom had a long history of struggles but when she was doing well



she was a really good mom. While at the shelter she got a job but the shifts she was offered were on weekends when there was no childcare available to her. Ashley kindly stepped in and offered to bring Khalid home with her and care for him every weekend along with her 3 year old son, Jacob. Khalid's mom, having grown to trust Ashley, jumped at the chance and the bond between the two women grew even stronger. In her heart, Ashley rooted for Khalid's mom to do well and leave the shelter for her own place. Unfortunately, that was not to be. Her addictions proved too strong to overcome. Khalid eventually ended up in DCF care with people he didn't know. Ashley was

devastated. That's when she decided to be a resource for Khalid. Unfortunately Khalid's mom couldn't re-cooperate to offer Khalid her full ability to care for him. Today, Ashley still remains a primary role in Khalid's life.

Sometimes things happen at different times in people's lives. That

same unpredictability happens to children as well. It's a matter of helping out who needs to be helped at the time they need to be helped. It's not about the age of the child or the timing it's about knowing that right now there is someone who needs to have someone step-up and offer them their time, effort, guidance, and unconditional commitment. Family planning doesn't always come in perfect packages. We tend to be driven to and inspired by those packages, see its beauty and take the time to open them to unveil the potential gift inside. And isn't that what the very best foster care is all about?

**Refer someone who would be great at fostering and upon licensure be awarded \$500.00**

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THE MUSICAL  
**Annie**  
FREE REHEARSAL SHOW FOR  
FOSTER PARENTS



As we make significant improvements to Connecticut's foster care system, National Adoption Month affords the opportunity to bring a heightened focus to a group of children -- teenagers -- who continue to present important challenges in finding homes and families.

Everyone who works here at the Department rightfully should be proud of the progress we have made these past several years. As a result of our family-centered, strengths-based Strengthening Families Practice Model, there are 18.3 percent fewer children in care. Of those who remain in care, a larger share live with relatives or kin and a smaller share live in congregate care. The number of children out of state has declined by almost 90 percent. But as the system gets healthier, teenagers remain one of our more significant challenges. Indeed, children age 12 and older represent more than half the total number of children in care.

As you know, November is National Adoption Month and gives us a chance to raise awareness about the need to

find additional homes for children in care. It is only fitting that we use the occasion to remind people that teenagers -- while they can be challenging -- are wonderful, smart and talented people who can bring great joy and meaning to any home.

- On October 29, the New Haven Alex and Ani location held a special event at which 15 percent of the proceeds is being donated to a special fund for children in care.
- During November 1-3, faith communities across Connecticut will raise their voices and ring church bells for Connecticut's foster children waiting for permanent homes.
- On Sunday November 3, Build-A-Bear stores in Danbury, Manchester, Trumbull and West Hartford will host adopted children as they make a bear for themselves and for children in state care.
- IHOP Family Restaurants in Hamden, Orange and Wallingford will use a special placemat to raise awareness about adoption and foster care.

- A special exhibition of artwork -- "Doors to Hope and Healing" -- by children at the Department's Albert J. Solnit Psychiatric Center will be displayed at the Schubert Theater in New Haven. Sixteen hand-painted miniature doors will be accompanied by stories of the artists about their experience with foster care and adoption.

- On November 22, "National Adoption Day" will be celebrated in a number of Superior Courts across the state with formal legal proceedings to finalize adoptions open to the media.

Thanks for all your hard working in "Strengthening Families." You are making a positive difference in the lives of many children and families.

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## Finding the Perfect Match

by Yadira Duran, MSW, Program Manager

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Today is the first day in November - National Adoption Month and CT has 3,846 children in care, 217 (5.6%) of which are serviced by the Milford Area Office. The Milford Office Permanency Planning Team (PPT) has been working diligently to find the perfect match for 19 of these children, who are in need of a forever family - a family that will adopt them and make a commitment to helping them continue to grow into the best person they could be. For some families, the work begins with babies and for

others it begins with adolescents who anticipate having someone witness them graduating high school and moving them in to college. There is no algorithm to finding the perfect match; it's about finding a family who is willing to meet the individualized needs of our children...forever.

*For more information on children available for adoption, contact your support Social Worker.*

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## Life Books

Life books are an amazing tool to use, especially for children. A life book helps explain and capture significant life events so a child can understand it today and in the years to come. It includes pictures and explanations either in the child's words or in words a child would understand. A similar book, photo album, or scrap book can also be used for bio/adoptive or permanent children in the home as well. It can help them understand circumstances that lead up to moves, and how relationships that are shorter in time do not mean they are lesser in significance. Start yours today!

# What do the Holidays mean for our

Parenting foster children can be a challenge at any time of the year, but holidays seem to be extra stressful. There are a ton of parties to attend, gifts to buy, and the financial strain can really bring a person down. Get quick ideas of things to get done in your foster family before the holidays get here so you can have time to enjoy a cup of hot chocolate. Remember all of the little things that make the season fun. Do you have extra stockings for foster children entering your home at the last minute? It's not uncommon for a child to arrive on Christmas Eve. How about extra gifts for Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or Three Kings?



## Celebrating Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is celebrated by many African Americans and has seven principles known as the Ngoro Saba.



Celebrating Three Kings Day, Also known as the Epiphany is celebrated on January 6. This year, Epiphany falls on Monday, January 6, 2014. Celebrated by many Latin Cultures.



## Celebrating Hanukkah

Also known as The Festival of Lights, It falls every year in late November or December on the secular calendar and lasts for eight days and nights. Celebrated in the Jewish culture.

## Help Your Foster Children Understand the Season

Some of the foster children that will enter your home have not understood the coming Holiday season. Take time to read a few books. Explain your feelings about the season and help a child learn to enjoy the season on a different level.

## Plan any Gifts for Birth Family Whether from You or the Children

Are you going to give the birth parents a simple gift this holiday? Give photo albums of their children or framed photos. What about bus vouchers so that they can get to work or to visits? What a great way to help with the reunification efforts. Keep in mind that some foster children have not experienced giving gifts to others. The concept may not even cross their minds, so be there to lead the way.

## Discuss the Dates for Holiday Birth Family Visits

Contact your worker early in the season. Keep an open mind, but also advocate for your family's needs. Remember your holiday schedule and the child's behavior after visits. Remember, most workers need about a two week notice to make any major change.

## Watch for Signs of the Holiday Blues

Holidays can be a difficult time for many foster families. This is traditionally a time for family and for a child who is not with his/her birth family, a time for remembering the ones they've had to say goodbye to. All families have their good moments, even if they are few in number. These moments mean the world to foster children in the system. These memories are sometimes the only thing they have left of birth family. It can, however, be a great bonding moment for foster families - a time to sit down and share memories.

## Contact Your Worker about any Travel Dates

If you're planning on leaving town for the holidays, contact your worker well in advance. Most require at least two weeks notice. There needs to be plenty of time for the workers to arrange travel vouchers for the child, or if needed respite if the child is unable to attend.

## Plan Activities for the Kids to Enjoy During the Break from School

This could be a great time to work on life books when homework is not a burden. If you start to get a bit cabin crazy look for activities away from home such as attending the YMCA for a swim or the library.

## Prepare Extended Family and Your Foster Children for Family Gatherings

Holidays or big family gatherings are a tough situation for introducing your foster children to your extended family. Your extended family may feel uneasy about your choice to be a foster parent in the first place. Meeting the foster child/ren may help this situation or confirm their fears.



**FASU's Holiday Brunch this year will be on December 14th, at Fantasia Banquet Hall, 404 Washington Ave, North Haven, CT RSVP to your support worker or CAFAP liaison.**

# 10 Ways to Motivate Your Child to Learn

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## LEARNING BENEFITS

If you want your child to be a stellar student, don't limit learning to the walls of his classroom. Although the skills he's learning there are crucial to his intellectual and social growth, your child needs your help to open up the world of ideas. His renewed **joy in discovery** will transfer to his schoolwork, so you'll boost his academic achievement too!

**Fill your child's world with reading.** Take turns reading with your older child, or establish a family reading time when everyone reads her own book. Demonstrate how important reading is to you by filling your home with printed materials: novels, newspapers, even posters and placemats with words on them.

**Encourage him to express his opinion, talk about his feelings, and make choices.** He can pick out a side dish to go with dinner and select his own extracurricular activities. Ask for his input on family decisions, and show that you value it.

**Show enthusiasm for your child's interests and encourage her to explore subjects that fascinate her.** If she's a horse nut, offer her stories about riding or challenge her to find five facts about horses in the encyclopedia.

**Provide him with play**

**opportunities that support different kinds of learning styles — from listening and visual learning to sorting and sequencing.** Supplies that encourage open-ended play, such as **blocks**, will develop your child's creative expression and problem-solving skills as he builds. He'll need lots of **unstructured play time** to explore them.



**Point out the new things you learn with enthusiasm.** Discuss the different ways you find new information, whether you're looking for gardening tips on the Internet or taking a night class in American literature.

**Ask about what he's learning in school, not about his grades or test scores.** Have him teach you what he learned in school today — putting the lesson into his own words will help him retain what he learned.

**Help your child organize her school papers and assignments so she feels in control of her work.** If her task seems too daunting, she'll spend more time worrying than learning. Check in with her regularly to make sure she's not feeling overloaded.

**Celebrate achievements, no matter how small.** Completing a book report calls for a special treat; finishing a book allows your child an hour of video games. You'll offer **positive reinforcement** that will inspire him to keep learning and challenging himself.

**Focus on strengths, encouraging developing talents.** Even if she didn't ace her math test, she may have written a good poem in English class. In addition to a workbook for math practice, give her a writing journal.

**Turn everyday events into learning opportunities.** Encourage him to explore the world around him, asking questions and

**making connections.**

[www.Scholastic.com](http://www.Scholastic.com)

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## Kinship Care Grows in CT

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Kinship Foster Care is a program designed to help support a child who resides outside of his or her own home, either temporarily or for the long term, with the relative (such as an adult brother or sister, a first cousin, a nephew or niece, an uncle or aunt or a grandparent, among others). Kinship Care supports the concept of children residing with a relative to alleviate family stress or

temporary familial problems, rather than being placed in a foster home or other type of out-of-home placement. For children who do come to the attention of the child welfare system, Kinship Care creates another placement option for a child who may not be able to continue living at home with his or her parents.

Over the past year, Connecticut has increased the proportion of children served in relative placements. According to a recent press release by Governor Malloy, the percentage of children in care living with relatives and kin increased from 21 percent in January 2011 to 30.3 percent in September 2013, an increase of 44.3 percent.

## A Teen's Hope For A Home



The Department of Children and Families, Office of Foster Care and Adoption, is pleased to announce a partnership with Big Y World Class Markets in CT. Big Y supermarkets will provide a discount on the **last Monday of each month**. Enrollment has been extended for all licensed DCF foster and adoptive families who have a Big Y Savings Card. It's easy to enroll! Simply complete the form and submit all your information. The 10% savings will be programmed into your Big Y Savings Card for discount use on the last Monday of each month. If a DCF Foster or Adoptive parent does not have a Big Y Savings Card, please visit your local Big Y and sign up for a card.

Please email any questions regarding this promotion to Jackie Ford at [jacqueline.ford@ct.gov](mailto:jacqueline.ford@ct.gov). Big Y will not be able to answer any questions about this promotion at the local store level. Please note, this discount will only apply to those DCF Foster and Adoptive parents with an active Big Y Savings Card. *No exceptions apply.*

Hi, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm 16 years old. My favorite colors are red and black... I love to hang out with my friends and spend time with my family. I am going into jr. year and am hoping to be in the valley (Ansonia, Derby, Shelton, Seymour) or at least as close as possible so I can be near my family, & friends. I do my best when it comes to my grades in school. Last year, I was on the honor roll all year except the last quarter. I write poetry and love listening to music. I listen to everything from lil' Kim Park to Eminem. Music is a big thing with me. I would like the freedom to go out and see my friends. When I don't have my freedom I feel trapped. I understand that in order to have freedom I need to help out & do chores, & try to keep my grades up. After high school I would like to attend a four-year college for social work. I want to help kids who are abandoned, traumatized or just need help.

**If you or someone you know is interested in this youth or any TEEN in foster care, call FAM at (203) 394-8506**

### REGION 2 EVENTS

Nov 7	Adoption Event	Milford DCF	Adoption Awareness Month Celebration RSVP to Natalie Caban 203-306-5278 or Lizette Flores-Gregory 203-786-2515
Nov 6 & 13 6:00-8:45	Module 7 Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity	Milford DCF	Please call CAFAP to register: 860-258-3400 or CAFAP Liaison 203 306 5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Nov 13 6:30-8:30	Relative support group	Milford YMCA	To register call Maryellen 203-701-8411 or CAFAP Liaison 203-306-5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Nov 20 5:30-8:00	Empowerment & support group Topic: Foster care and the holidays	Milford DCF	Please pre-register with CAFAP liaison 203 306 5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Nov 20 6:00-9:00	Spanish Speaking Support Group Topic: Module 17 The Oppositional Defiant Child	New Haven DCF	RSVP to Lillian 203-701-8411 or Marisol 203-306-5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Dec 11 6:30-8:30	Relative Support	Milford YMCA	To register call Maryellen 203-701-8411 or CAFAP Liaison 203-306-5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Dec 3 & 10 6:00-8:45	Module 9 Managing your foster care experience	Milford DCF	Please call CAFAP to register: 860-258-3400 or CAFAP Liaison 203 306 5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Dec 14	Holiday Celebration	Fantasia's North Haven, CT	Invites coming soon

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## Letter from Teresa, Region 2's FASU Program Manager

*Dear Caretakers:*

*All of you may be at very different places with how you feel, or where you are at with partnering with us as licensed caretakers. Some of you have specifically come forward to care for a specific child or relative. Some of you had joined us years ago and you are very experienced partners. Other may have come in recently and are still trying to gain a better sense with how confident you feel about your role within our agency.*

*Ultimately you as our partners need to reassess if this is the right partnership for you. We respect that.*

*Where ever you are in your journey as a licensed caretaker I can tell you how confident I am about how needed you are. We have children every day who need a place to stay temporarily until they can be reunified or can connect with extended family. These same children potentially also need that same family to say we want to support you in your journey if it means going home, we will always be here for you in some form or capacity, and if going home or with extended family doesn't work out, we will be your forever family.*

*We have so many amazing stories of children's lives being changed because of our great families. Children have gone back to school, are doing better in school, they are eating and feeling healthier, they are starting to at some level address some of their losses or past trauma. They are saying they feel good about where they are at. These are children today that will in years to come talk about how we (you as our partners along with the agency) made a difference in their life. These children will some day as adults accredit some of their cherished accomplishments on the impact we had on molding their development.*

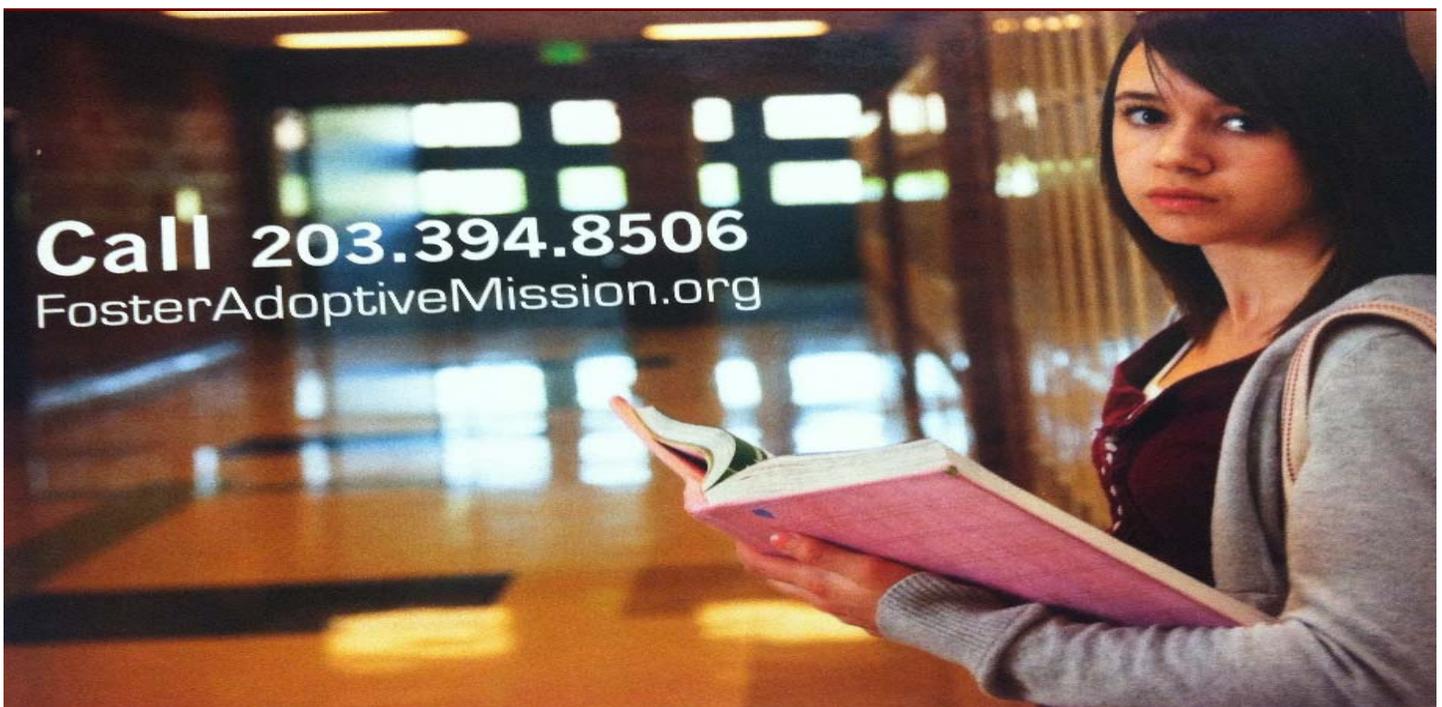
*Each of you will in spite of the trial and tribulations they (we too) may challenge you with today, tomorrow will seem minor in comparison to the proceeds.*

*We are a social service agency. We all hope we change the quality of life for children and families who are struggling. None of us can do it without you.*

*We value you, respect you, and celebrate our accomplishments with you one child at a time.*

*Thank you for partnering with us, one child at a time*

*Teresa Fazio Winters,*





# Sacred Heart Academy

EXCELSIOR - IMPELLED BY CHRIST'S LOVE

The Private Preshow/Rehearsal is being opened up to all Active Connecticut Foster/Adoptive Families. Check your mailbox!



**NOVEMBER 14, 2013 FREE Rehearsal Showing for foster parents**

**SHUBERT** LIVE ENTERTAINMENT IN NEW HAVEN  
 NEW HAVEN 247 College St., New Haven, CT, 203-562-5666

with **ticketmaster**

## Region 2 DCF/ CAFAP & Community Support Groups

Milford	Second Tuesday	6:30 – 8:30 p.m.	Relative/ Round 2	English	Maryellen Schoonmaker 203 701 8411 Christine Surel(CAFAP) 203 306 5280 Michelle Edwards(DCF) 203 306 5279
Milford	Call for date	6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Foster	English	Christine Surel(CAFAP) 203.306.5280
Milford	Second Tuesday	6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Pre-adoptive/Adoptive	English	Natalie Caban(DCF) 203.306.5278 or Lizzette Flores-Gregory(DCF) 203.786.2515
Milford	Quarterly	6:00 - 8:00 p.m.	Adolescent caregivers	English	Rosemary Whitaker(DCF) 203.306.5282 Lafreda Simuel-Carver(DCF) 203.786.2514
Milford	Last Wednesday, Seasonally	1:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Playground social group Call for location	English	Christine Surel(CAFAP) 203.306.5280
Milford	Third Tuesday	6:30 p.m.	Special Parents, Special Kids of Milford	English	<a href="mailto:spskofmilfordct@gmail.com">spskofmilfordct@gmail.com</a>
New Haven	Third Monday	6:30 – 8:30 p.m.	Foster	English	Margaret Carter(CAFAP) 203.786.0681
New Haven	Third Monday	10:00 – 12:30 p.m.	Grandparents raising grandchildren	English	Ester Arrmand 203.789.7645
New Haven	First & Third Monday	10:30 – 12:00 p.m.	Grandparents raising grandchildren	English	Lewis Campbell 203.946.5772
New Haven	Third Tuesday	6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Foster/Adoptive	Spanish	Lillian Marcano(DCF) 203.786.2500 Marisol Gomez(DCF) 203.786.0685
New Haven	Second Tuesday	6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Relative	English	Doris Cruthird(DCF) 203.786.2514
New Haven	Call for dates	6:15 -7:45	Parents of children with special needs	English	Dorothy 203.606.3713
New Haven	Call for dates	And times	Adoptive parents and children Support group	English	203-865-5437 Voice 203-865-KIDS
New Haven	Email for dates	And times	Challenge to victory, Parents supporting Parents, caregivers & guardians	English	<a href="mailto:Womenofcolornewhavenct@yahoo.com">Womenofcolornewhavenct@yahoo.com</a>
West Haven	Second Monday	6:00-8:00	family with special needs children	English	Karen Muro, <a href="mailto:karenmmuro@aol.com">karenmmuro@aol.com</a> 203-937-3565 and Barbara Anthony
West Haven	Last Thursday	6:30-8:30 p.m.	family with special needs children	Spanish	Rosalyn Diaz 203-931-6850 and Ms. Melissa Martinez-Baez
West Haven	First Wednesday	6:00-8:00 p.m.	Autism Family Support Group	English	Angela Potter, <a href="mailto:potter_a@subway.com">potter_a@subway.com</a> , Catherine Edwards
Derby	Tuesdays	5:00-7:30 p.m.	Parent Child Resource Support group	English	Natine Haley 203-345-1836 <a href="mailto:msj32361@yahoo.com">msj32361@yahoo.com</a> Lori Parise 203- 954-0543 Ext. 181 <a href="mailto:lparise@lnvpcrc.org">lparise@lnvpcrc.org</a>
Ansonia	Call for dates	And times	North Star Autism Support group	English	Cathy Adamczyk 203-735-6098 or 203-751-2417