



# News and Notes

## Youth Alternatives Foster Care Program

### Grief and Loss and Holidays

The holiday season has begun and this can be a particularly difficult time for children in foster care. Whether it is their first or sixth season away from their birth family, the holidays often invoke a sense of loss and grief. Think about your first holiday away from your family. Even though it is likely that it was your choice, it is hard to be away from family and the comforting and familiar rituals that define holidays.

Here are some things parents can do to help their foster children with grief and loss issues around the holidays:

- ◆ Involve your child in physical activities so that they may have an outlet for their stress.
- ◆ Help them work on their life books by recording special holiday memories and traditions.
- ◆ Be especially mindful of your child's family visits. Start a tradition for after visits, like going for an ice cream, taking a walk or ride in the car so that the child can talk about the visit and relax.
- ◆ When you listen to a child talk about his or her birth family, help them assign names to the feelings they are experiencing: "you must really miss your family," "you sound really sad and disappointed you cannot be home on Christmas."
- ◆ Never compare losses. All loss is experienced at 100%. There is no such thing as half grief, especially for children.
- ◆ Time doesn't heal, actions do. Recovery from loss or grief happens through a series of small action choices by the griever. Help your children take these small steps.
- ◆ Grief is normal and natural. It is the reaction to loss. In and of itself, it is not a psychological condition.
- ◆ Children (and adults) show grief in different ways. Be mindful of the particular ways your foster child grieves.

The holidays are also a challenging time for your child's birth family, not only the parents, but siblings, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. Use the visit times to listen for family stories, traditions, and genealogy. Jot this information down for your child's life book.

Holidays can be a great time to make connections with your child's birth family. Have your foster child's pictures taken and provide a variety of photo sizes for your child's birth parents. Have your child send a holiday card to their siblings and include a photo.

Making connections with your child's birth family may help your child to build a strong identity and contribute to building his or her self esteem.

### Youth Alternatives, Inc.

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### YA All Stars

- ☉ Erik G. brought home an outstanding report card!
- ☉ Thanks to Kate Wicker for talking with a prospective foster parent who now wants to work with YA!
- ☉ Thanks to Todd and Kathy Farrington and Mike Daigle who answered questions for prospective foster parents at the Fall Preservice Training.

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# Training Corner

## December Trainings

### Trainings from YA:

To register for YA trainings email: [registration@youthalternatives.org](mailto:registration@youthalternatives.org) or call 874-1175.

- 12/17 Medication Administration 9-12 YA 2nd Floor Conf Room
- 12/21 First Aid 9-12:30 YA 2nd Floor Conf Room
- 12/21 CPR 1-4 YA 2nd Floor Conf Room

### Trainings from other sources:

CWTI trainings; FMI or to register contact Jeanine Brown at 626-5200 or [jeanine.brown@maine.gov](mailto:jeanine.brown@maine.gov)

- 12/7 & 12/9 Blending traditions and Values in Adoptive and Foster Families 6-9 pm CWTI, 298 Water St, Augusta

DHS Trainings: FMI or to register call 287-9355 or register online at [www.maine.gov/dhs/setu/registrationprocedures.htm](http://www.maine.gov/dhs/setu/registrationprocedures.htm)

- 11/29 & 12/2 Behavior Management Strategies for Foster and Adoptive Parents 6-9 pm DHHS, Lewiston
- 12/2 Trauma and Childhood 9-4 Maple Hills Farms, Hallowell
- 12/14 Suicide Process and Prevention 9-4 DHHS Augusta

### Upcoming Trainings:

**Teen Suicide** presented by Peter MacMullan from 9-4 on Friday, January 21 at Youth Alternatives.



# Training Requirements

Your Foster Home License requirements are that primary and secondary parents have 48 hours of training in the two year licensing period. At least half the hours must consist of training that is 3 hours in length or more. CPR and First Aid recertifications do not count as trainings for your license.

YA requires primary parents to have 40 hours and secondary parents, 20 hours, each year. YA requires that foster parents have yearly training in CPR, First Aid, Medication Administration, and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention. In addition, primary parents are required to attend both All Foster Parents Days while secondary parents must attend only one per year. If you have questions about training requirements, speak with your case manager.



## Spotlight on Leslie Lennig, Case Manager

Leslie Lennig has been a case manager at Youth Alternatives for 5 years. She is currently in her second year at Boston College's School of Social Work working on her masters degree in clinical social worker. As part of her master's program, she is required to complete a 16 hour per week clinical internship. Leslie's internship is at YA in the Intensive Supervision Services. After beginning her internship with this program, Leslie was offered a temporary full time position which she accepted. Leslie's last day with Treatment Foster Care Services is Friday, November 5. The YA staff,

Leslie's foster homes, parents and children, will miss her very much! Leslie will still be teaching Red Cross CPR and First Aid so we will all be able to continue to see her regularly!

**Born:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**College:** University of Vermont

**Grad School:** Boston College

**Date and Degree:** MSW, 2006

**Favorite Color:** Green

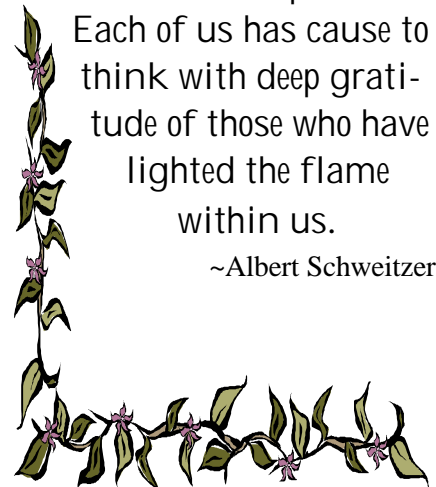
**Favorite Ice Cream:** "Would rather have French fries..."

**Best thing about working in Foster Care:** "the relationships I have with my foster parents and foster kids, and the YA foster care team..."

**Worst thing:** "the paper work!! "

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

~Albert Schweitzer



# BE NATURAL: Dealing with Holiday Stress

Whether we celebrate Thanksgiving, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Christmas, Diwali, the calendar New Year, or the Lunar New Year, the winter holidays are heartfelt and filled with the promise of good cheer and great traditions. Our families will be together and happy; all of our children, foster and bio/adopted will be good and grateful; our partners will be gracious mind readers; our wallets will have enough cash and our days enough hours; and our spirits will be filled with peace and love.

Or not.

More likely is that the holiday experience for adults and children will be stressful. This year make a commitment to yourself and your family to try some strategies to minimize the harried holidays syndrome.

The first step is to acknowledge what the stresses are. The holidays are filled with expectations. And in this Martha Stewart "it's a good thing" world, the holidays are more complex than ever. The ideal is for families to be together and get along

wonderfully over a huge holiday meal after everyone has opened the artfully wrapped presents carefully chosen for each one's tastes and desires. The truth is entire families can rarely get-together on a regular basis and buying the "perfect" present is a myth perpetuated by the Mall Association of America.

In the coming season of hope, hype and hoopla, there are things that parents can do to take care of themselves and, therefore, take care of others.

Here's an acronym to use as reminder to thrive in the coming season:



## BE NATURAL

**B—Breathe** deeply, it will help increase your energy level.

**E—Exercise:** 20 minutes a day, three times a week, and running from errand to errand doesn't count.

**N—Nutrition:** Three well-balanced meals each day.

**A—Attitude:** Negative attitudes are contagious and destructive. Try to see the glass half full (or more).

**T—Time management:** Set priorities and don't take on more than you can handle.

**U—Uniqueness:** Recognize and treasure your on uniqueness. Say "no" when necessary. If you can't say "no", say "I'll think about it..." to give yourself the time to say no.

**R—Relaxation:** Private time to read or listen to music—time not to focus on the next item on your to do list.

**A—Associations:** Maintain contact with nurturing support systems—friends, family, colleagues.

**L—Laughter:** still the best medicine.

## Trends in Foster Care are Highlighted at All Foster Parent Day

At the All Foster Parents Day, emerging trends were discussed. Anne Archibald offered the following:

- The Federal Government is financially supporting states (including Maine) to increase the number of adoptions.
- Foster Care is not seen as being part of permanency plans.
- Lengths of stay are decreasing. Treatment level children are noted to have more challenges and needs.

- The work of foster families is to support reunification or adoption readiness.
- Approximately 75% of new referrals will be adolescent-aged children.
- Referrals are sent out to all therapeutic agencies.

In addition to this information, Anne reported on two Department of Corrections (DOC) programs that involve foster parents. The **first** program involves providing emergency placements (up to 14

days). The youth will get YA case management services and their DOC officer will also support the placement. The youth must following the home and placement rules or go to a correctional facility. The board rate is \$55/day.

The **second** possible program is longer term: 7-8 months. YA would provide case management services and family therapy. The goal is to return the youth home. The board rate would be \$55-60/day. For more information, call Anne Archibald.

# What was actually on the Menu at the First Thanksgiving?

In 1621, the Plymouth colonists and the Wampanoag Indians shared an harvest feast. Historians are not completely sure about what was on the menu.

Venison and wild fowl are the only two foods mentioned in writings about that first feast. Food that was available at that time included:

**SEAFOOD:** Cod, Eel, Clams, Lobster

**WILD FOWL:** Wild Turkey, Goose, Duck, Crane, Swan, Partridge, Eagles

**MEAT:** Venison, Seal

**GRAIN:** Wheat Flour, Indian Corn

**VEGETABLES:** Pumpkin, Peas, Beans, Onions, Lettuce, Radishes, Carrots

**FRUIT:** Plums, Grapes

**NUTS:** Walnuts, Chestnuts, Acorns

**HERBS and SEASONINGS:** Olive Oil, Liverwort, Leeks, Dried Currants, Parsnips

The following foods, many considered staples at our modern day Thanksgiving

Meals, were not on the Pilgrims' and Wampanoag's menu:

**HAM:** There is no evidence that the colonists had butchered a pig by this time, though they had brought pigs with them from England.

**SWEET POTATOES/POTATOES:** These were not common.

**CORN ON THE COB:** Corn was kept dried out at this time of year.

**CRANBERRY SAUCE:** The colonists had cranberries but no sugar at this time.



**PUMPKIN PIE:** It's not a recipe that exists at this point, though the pilgrims had recipes for stewed pumpkin.

**CHICKEN/EGGS:** We know that the colonists brought hens with them

from England, but it's unknown how many they had left at this point or whether the hens were still laying.

**MILK:** No cows had been aboard the *Mayflower*, though it's possible that the colonists used goat milk to make cheese.

The first Thanksgiving was actually a three day long feast. It occurred sometime between September 21 and November 11. The feast probably did not have anything sweet. The Pilgrims had brought some sugar with them on the *Mayflower* but by the time of the feast that supply had dwindled. They also didn't have any ovens so pies, cakes and breads were not possible at all. Besides eating, the Wampanoag and the Pilgrim danced, sang secular songs and played games.

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