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Issue
ONE

Our Mission: To provide safe homes, healing and healthy environments and encouraging youth empowerment.

The Heartbeat

The Official Newsletter of The Heart Matters Foster Family Agency



Healthy Snack Ideas: >>>

- Avacado toast w/ cherry tomatoes
- Oven baked sweet potato fries
- Fruit smoothies
- Peanut butter Cherio clusters

Changes Around the Agency

Change can be a good thing!

As you may have noticed, there are several changes here at The Heart Matters! We have new office staff, Veronica Paniagua and Mariah Mota.

They are helping keep our office running efficiently and here to help all of our families and social workers. These ladies are a great asset to our agency and are critical to the success of The Heart Matters.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to email Veronica (veronica@thmffa.org). Our agency is growing so rapidly thanks to all of your great references, that we needed to hire new staff, in order to ensure all of our families needs were met. This included the addition of three new Agency Social Workers, Mario Sanchez, Ester Campbell and Misty Foster.

If you have not had a chance to meet our new workers yet, rest assured you will get your chance! Our agency prides itself in hiring quality social workers to manage our homes.

Just a reminder your Agency Social Workers are your first line of defense for questions, concerns or problem solving. They are highly skilled and will be a fantastic asset to you and the children placed in your home. Agency Social Workers

are available 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Please keep in contact with them in regards to anything that changes in your home and any issues that may arise. If you have any questions or concerns that need immediate attention or you are unable to resolve with your Agency Social Worker, please contact the office and ask to speak to the Social Work Supervisor Lia Andrews. We are all here to support you!



RFA Snapshot >>>

What are Resource Families??

Resource Families are the new name for caregivers in a family setting to include:

- Foster Families,
- Relative Caregivers
- Adoptive Families



What do I need to do?

The agency is currently in the process of converting all previously certified foster parents to Resource Families. This is a long process, but if we need additional information we will be contacting you directly.



If you have any questions please feel free to call the office and we will be glad to help you. Also, you can complete your RFA training online through our Google Classroom. If you have not been enrolled please contact Lia-909-906-1023.

Why become RFA Certified?

The Resource Family Approval (RFA) process is streamlined, This should make it easier for foster families and relative caregivers to become legally permanent families.

All of the approval will be the same, therefore, there is no need for an additional assessment or process to change status.

Please start familiarizing yourself with the new language that is used in RFA, such as:

- Resource Family
- Resource Parent
- Level of Care (LOC)



Social Media Safety Tips:

- Educate yourself about social media.
- Establish an age limit.
- Talk to your kids about the dangers and consequences of social media.
- Keep the computer in a common area of your home.
- Set guidelines or rules.
- Adjust privacy settings.

10 APPS TEENS ARE USING THAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

	Calculator% This app looks like a calculator but functions like a secret photo vault.		Hot or Not Strangers rate your profile. Goal is to lead to a hook up.
	Omegle A free online chat website that promotes chatting anonymously to strangers.		Burn Book Post anonymous rumors about people through audio messages, texts, and photos.
	Yellow This app is designed to allow teens to flirt with each other in a Tinder-like atmosphere.		Wishbone An app that allows users to compare kids against each other and rate them on a scale.
	Whisper An anonymous app where the creators promote sharing secrets and meeting new people.		Kik Messaging app. Kik has built in apps and web content that would be filtered on home computer.
	Ask.fm Ask an anonymous question and get an answer. This app has been linked to the most severe forms of cyberbullying.		Instagram Many kids are now creating fake accounts to hide content from parents. Kids also like to text using Instagram because messages are deleted once a user leaves conversation.

FOR MORE INFO: APPSOLUTELYAPRIL.COM

My First Three Days in Foster Care and My Advice to Foster Parents

By: Jenna Thornburg (www.fosteringrights.org)

I spent 3 days wearing the same clothes to school.

At least my old, worn jeans were appropriate for the weather, but I didn't have my jacket. I'd left my jacket at home, and I couldn't go back to get it. I guess that would teach me to be unprepared.

January in the high desert can be cold, but at least it wasn't snowing. I had my backpack, my long-sleeved shirt, one pair of underwear, my jeans, and my tennis shoes. I never minded wearing the same jeans over again, but I felt so dirty having to wear the same underwear for 3 days. It felt like that was the worst part of the whole deal, a punishment for my crimes.

When I met my foster mom, I thought she was nice. She was pregnant and had a few other kids in the house. I was the only girl and the only kid old enough to be in middle school. I was the oldest at my house, too. So, I didn't mind not having other kids my age around. None of the other kids talked to me, and neither did my foster parents, really.

The whole thing was kind of surreal. I walked around my school with my head down for three days, hoping that even my close friends would just not notice me until I could change my clothes. No one mentioned it to me, but I was sure they knew. They had to know. Everyone paid attention to what you were wearing; it was a key part of 6th grade culture.

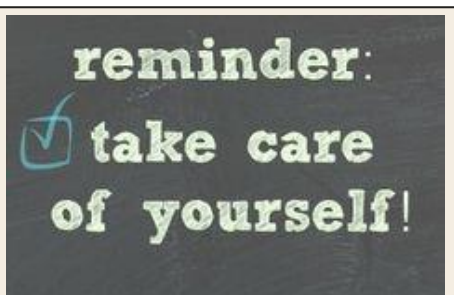
When the weekend came, my grandma and my aunts came to pick me up for a visit. I got a new jacket, some clothes, and most importantly, underwear. We didn't talk about the reason I was in foster care. In fact, neither did my foster mom and I; it felt like the elephant in the room. There I was, a kid in a new world, and everyone just acted like I was where I belonged. It was as if my old world had disappeared into my past and this new world was trying to prove some point by acting super normal.

I wish I could say that when I went back to live with my family after months in foster care that it was normal again, but I can't. I wish I could say that when my mom lost custody and I moved in with my aunt and uncle that it was normal, but I can't. The truth is, I lived in 6 places in just 4 years, and I graduated high school a year early just so I could escape.

I was a gypsy who never learned how to stay in one place with one set of people, because that just wasn't my life. If you want to hear more of my story, stay tuned. I'd love to share more with you in the weeks to come. It gets better, I promise.

"All kids need is a little hope, a little help and someone who believes in them."

-Magic Johnson



Self-Care Tips:

- 1. Have a life outside of foster care or adoption.** Schedule time with your spouse/partner and friends. You deserve to laugh with adults and share hopes and dreams.
- 2. Maintain your spiritual life.** It will get you through the happiest and toughest times. You won't feel alone.
- 3. Create a life book for your family with photos and stories.** It can be comforting to look at your memories.
- 4. If you need a break, take it.** Use your prudent parenting abilities to have a night out or some much needed "Me time."
- 5. Create healthy boundaries when working with birth families.** If they want to call their child, let them know the best times for their child to talk. Don't lend them money. Lending money starts a bad habit you will regret.

Jenna's Advice:

1. Leave an open line of communication.

This can be as simple as, "If you want to talk about anything, I want to listen." or "How are you feeling?" or "Do you need anything?" Even if you don't get an answer, the intent is there. You never know when they will take you up on your offer.

2. Don't expect anything.

Laying down your family's lifestyle and rules is important, but don't expect any child to mold to what you expect in 3 days, 3 weeks, or 3 months. You don't know what they've been through. Some things are easy to change, and some seem insurmountable.

3. Take care of the basics.

Underwear, socks, school supplies, personal care items, clothes. Food they will eat falls into this category too. I always asked if they had a preference for toothpaste, shampoo, a toothbrush, deodorant, and snacks. This gives them a little control over their new world and can provide a small slice of normalcy when everything else is different.

4. Take care of you.

A new person in your home can feel overwhelming on both sides. Making sure you have a support system in place where you can ask for help or advice is important. If you are overwhelmed, how are you going to help a child? Pray, take deep breaths, read a book, take a walk, write, or do something that helps you clear your mind and focus.

Carrie's Corner

A Note from Our Executive Director

Welcome to Our Very First Edition!!

As you are all aware, there are many people involved in the lives of each and every foster child. From attorneys to county workers, to CASA volunteers, school personnel and sometimes therapists, and on and on. Everyone involved in each foster child's life is working toward the best interest of the child with regards to safety and well-being and permanency.

But none are doing so on the highest level like our RESOURCE PARENTS. We love you all. We highly value your contribution to the team and your dedication, your perseverance, your courage and your ability to love more, give more and stay the course and not give up.

Resource parenting is not easy and we know that. We know that no case ever goes as quickly as you imagined or as smoothly. We know that you are part of a system that most people don't understand.

Sometimes you don't understand the rules of the system and how you are going to keep loving and possibly losing, keep saying goodbye and saying hello, providing one more document or packing one more overnight bag. It is not always fun, and it is hardly ever easy. But in the end, it is worth it a million times over, and the blessings are there all along: in your foster child's smile and laugh, in their ability to attach to you and their ability to learn how to love and be a family from you.

Because of you, they finally go home to their family-stronger and happier-or they become a permanent part of your family.

For all that you do, we celebrate you! This newsletter is our way of saying THANK YOU, for who you are and what you do!

Most Gratefully,

Carrie



Recipe of the Month

Quick and Easy Cheesy Chicken Enchiladas

Prep time: 10 mins **Cook time:** 30 mins **Total time:** 40 mins

Ingredients

- 1 can {18.5 oz} Progresso Chicken and Cheese Enchilada Soup
- 1 can {10 oz} Old El Paso hot or mild enchilada sauce
- 2 cups cooked chicken, shredded
- 2 cups Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
- 10 corn or flour tortillas
- 2 medium green onions, sliced thinly

Instructions

- Heat oven to 350°F.
- In medium bowl, combine soup and enchilada sauce
- Spread 1 cup soup mixture into 11x7 inch baking dish
- In large bowl, mix 1 cup soup mixture with chicken and 1 cup of the cheese; reserve remaining soup mixture.
- Warm tortillas in the microwave with a paper towel, heat on High 1 minute until soft
- Place ¼ cup chicken mixture down the center of each tortilla
- Roll up and place seam sides down in baking dish
- Pour remaining soup mixture over enchiladas.
- Sprinkle with remaining 1 cup cheese and green onions on top.
- Bake about 30 minutes or until cheese is melted and sauce is bubbly
- Serve plain or with your favorite toppings



Carrie Mathews
Executive Director

“Sometimes the heart sees what is invisible to the eye.”



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