

Between Families

Foster family living

Don't blink — it's over

This has been a roller coaster month for my family. Our youngest has experienced her final high school athletic event and graduation all in one month. We have experienced a vast array of emotions these last few days sitting at her last district softball game and watching her walk across the stage to close a chapter in her life and open a brand new one. However, the one thing I noticed was a child who didn't have a parent in attendance at this life changing event.

So it makes me think — why do foster parents do what they do? Not to replace the biological parent, but to step in and be a part of a child's life, to be there for them at a time like this. So take a minute and pat yourself on the back and think about how much you truly mean to the child in your home. Every child deserves someone to be there for them no matter how big or how small the event might be. For this I say THANK YOU to all our foster parents out there. Thank you for all the big and little things you do for our kids.

Jason Cecil, director of regional recruitment



Safety procedures: **tornado drills**

It's important to have a plan of action before severe weather threatens, and one way to prepare is with tornado drills. This is a requirement for foster homes as stated in K.A.R. 28-4-822(f), "Tornado drills are conducted monthly (April-September), schedules rotated, and dates and times recorded."

The American Red Cross suggests designating a safe room in your house where everyone can go during a tornado. This room should be in a basement, storm cellar or interior room on the lowest floor without windows. Make sure everyone, including new placements, knows where this room is, as well as when they should gather there, and practice going to this room once a month with everyone in your home. There are several additional ways to prepare for severe weather; healthychildren.org and redcross.org are two great websites to checkout.

Remain in compliance by conducting and documenting monthly drills. If you do not have a fire and tornado drill form, request one from your foster care worker or licensing specialist. Maintain a copy in your home and also have it available for your worker or KDHE to observe.

While only tornado drills were discussed in this article, don't forget to conduct monthly fire drills all year long!

Outstanding care providers

Kansas care providers of the month Patricia Dickerson

Patricia Dickerson has been a foster parent with TFI for over 12 years. Pat has an adult daughter of her own and has an adopted little girl who she first fostered. Just last month she signed an adoption placement agreement for a set of twins who she has fostered for over four years. Pat took them in as placements when they were just four weeks old — she is the only mom they have ever known, and she has loved and treated them as her own the entire time. While her very active daughter and twin toddlers keep her busy and always on the go, she hasn't let it slow her down from taking in other children and continuing to foster. She is always willing to help out with last minute or difficult to find respites. She will rearrange bedrooms and beds to accommodate any needs the agency has for respites and new placements. She doesn't shy away from what others may see as difficult behaviors and is always willing to give most kids a chance in her home. Pat is reliable and flexible, always working in partnership with agency workers and accommodating their schedules as often as she can. She is self-sufficient with getting children into services and has a good working relationship with numerous providers in the community. Pat attends agency support meetings, yearly foster care retreats and other TFI sponsored events and meetings throughout the year. She is an active member and volunteer in her church as well. Pat has proven over the years that she fosters for all the right reasons. She has consistently been an asset to our agency, and even more importantly, an asset to the children who are fortunate enough to enter her home — even if it is for just a short period of time.



Oklahoma care providers of the month Daniel and Kerrie Pozniak

Daniel and Kerrie Pozniak accepted a sibling group of three for their first placement at the beginning of April and have since just rolled with the challenges of fostering. The Pozniaks accepted this placement late in the evening so the kids would not have to remain at the DHS office overnight. The children had been attending Cache Public Schools, so the Pozniaks decided to transport the children to and from school daily, 40 minutes round trip, so they could complete the school year in a familiar school with their friends and cousins. They did not want the children to be traumatized any more than they already were. When the oldest child charged approximately \$150 to the credit card attached to their Xbox Live account, they responded sensibly by restricting his use of the Xbox and talking to him about being honest and not making purchases on the Xbox without permission. (They were also able to work with the credit card company to refund all the charges.) Recently, Daniel and Kerrie accepted another emergency placement around midnight. They are very accommodating for the children in their home. They always speak positively about the children and really just go out of their way to minimize the trauma and maximize a positive experience.



Oklahoma news

TFI welcomes new staff members

TFI Family Connections is excited to welcome Faith Pearson as the foster care supervisor for the central Oklahoma area. Faith is a master level social worker who has worked in the child welfare field for many years. She has worked for TFI in Kansas as a case manager, behavioral health therapist and then as supervisor for permanency services. Faith most recently worked at Oklahoma Department of Human Services as a child welfare specialist after moving back to the Oklahoma City area. Faith comes with a wealth of experience and knowledge about child welfare and foster care.

TFI has also recently hired new foster care workers across Oklahoma: Amber Hadley in the Lawton area, Renee Russell in the Enid area, Diana McFarland in the McAlester area, Amanda Powell in the Bartlesville and Tulsa area and Karla Ryan-Holmes in the Norman area. Collectively, these ladies bring

over 20 years of experience in child welfare and are well versed in the special needs that foster children and foster homes have.

With the addition of all these new employees, TFI is realigning the foster care workers and supervisors' territories. This may result in a change to your worker, but should increase their responsiveness to you.

TFI is excited with the growth of the foster care program over the past two years. We currently have over 150 foster homes with over 240 children in care, and we are so thankful you stepped up to help. The need for more foster homes is significant, as there are still over 8,000 foster children in care. Remember to talk to your friends and neighbors about the need for foster parents. Refer them and you will earn a bonus of \$500 when they become approved and receive their first placement.

Recruitment moment

There are many things we can do as an agency to try and recruit new foster families. We can run a commercial, sit at a booth during a local community event, pass out fliers to local businesses or speak to civic organizations and churches. So how do foster parents play into the recruiting process? Last month in the recruitment moment you were challenged to find a way to become more connected in your community, to build a relationship with someone new. Hopefully you took the opportunity to do this and saw the rewards for doing so. Now let's take that challenge one step further.

This challenge can change the life of a child you may never know, and there is not a better feeling than to help someone with no strings attached. In the next 30 days, when you are building new relationships or just talking to friends and family members, find one family willing to get more information on becoming a new TFI foster parent. Talk to them about the rewards of becoming a TFI foster parent and how you can see the change in the children that come into your home. Make sure to tell them to mention you referred them when they call us so you are eligible for the \$500 referral bonus when the family becomes licensed.

Just how important are foster parents in the recruitment process? You have been responsible for 25 percent of the newly licensed families for TFI. So once again, we thank you for everything you do and being the number one referral source for TFI Family Services. Happy recruiting!

~Jason Cecil, director of regional recruitment

Happy anniversary

15 years

Ronald & Lucretia Morey

5 years

Tony & Mindy Kasten

James & Heather Workman

1 year

Matthew & Sandy Sipp
Allen Spangler & Cinda Jonagan-Spangler
Justin Packard & Rhonda Pullan
Skip Pearce & Shauna Schaepef-Pearce
Angela DeFisher

William & Mandy Phillips
Deborah Henry
William & Melissa Bowles
Matthew & Starlene McClellan
Michael & Cynthia Ramirez
Lance & Carla Preston
James & Lori Roach



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\$500 referral bonus!

Know someone who would make a great foster parent? Refer them to TFI Family Services and receive a \$500 bonus when they become a foster parent.

For the most current calendar for Kansas Children Alliance Training, go to childdally.org/training.html

Connect with us:

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After hour emergencies, please call 877-921-4114.

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FOSTER
hope
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FOSTER
care