



Volume 12 Issue 6

JULY 2016

Kids Grow Better in Families



July is full of interesting facts:

It's Anti Boredom Month, Baked Bean Month, Hot Dog Month, AND Ice Cream Month! Also, it is Purposeful Parenting Month.

Facts: Congress declared July 4th as an official Holiday in 1870 in order to justify creating other official Holidays (like Christmas)? 1 out of 8 signers of the Declaration of Independence went to Harvard. 97% of fireworks come from China.

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GREETINGS FROM LESLIE



Hello Treatment Foster Families,

It has been five months since I transitioned into the role of Foster Parent Liaison. In these five months, I have been so inspired and energized by your devotion and kindness to the mission of AFGC and the kids that reside with you. I'm also proud of AFGC Staff, who everyday work hard to make the kids' lives better. With the investment of time that is put into the kids, you are making a difference and opening doors of opportunity. Thank you for being a Foster Parent, an investor, a collaborator, a team player, and a teacher in this shared mission.

This month is full of excitement, not only because of historical relevance, but also because celebrating is fun. As it is also Baked Beans Month, Ice Cream Month, and Hot Dog Month, I hope you can celebrate with these great staples too. Just be careful please. Too much fun with fireworks and the foods of the month may lead to heartburn.

Since it is also Purposeful Parenting Month, I thought I would take some time to explain what that is. Purposeful Parenting strives to build strong, positive, functional relationships that have meaning between parents and kids. It is a technique to learn that shifts from being reactive to taking action in a respectful and communicable manner. Here are five things that you can do in order to start the process of becoming a Purposeful Parent: 1. Take time to listen without giving advice. That said, working on solutions together is ok, as long as it is collaborative. 2. Be aware of where the adolescents are, and what they are watching. Perhaps talking about Netflix watching, like Orange is the New Black, and why they like it can give new outlooks on what is going on in their lives. Knowing where they are is important. Talk about the importance of safety. 3. Help adolescents avoid drug use. Explain the harmful effects, communicate rules and expectations, get to know their friends, and talk about healthy choices. 4. Eat dinner as a family. This can bring about communication about daily lives and matters that are important. And last but definitely not least, 5. Pay attention to your own wellbeing. Self-Care is something I talk about often, and I hope you are taking good care of your physical and mental health! If you would like to know more about Purposeful Parenting, just email me and I can send you some links!

*Best regards and Happy 4th of July,
Leslie*

RESPITE

Respite

By Kesha Taffe

Why take Respite? It is a break from youth in your care. Some may believe you do not need to take Respite, but for mental health reasons, it is highly recommended. There are reasons such as taking a small trip, vacation, or even for emergency reasons such as behavioral management concerns. All families have conflict. It is how it is resolved that matters, and AFGC can help. Whether this is with coping skills, learning new skills of behavioral management, or needing Respite, it is important to talk to the Family specialist in order to work out a plan of action.

When shouldn't you use Respite? It is not a punishment for behavioral issues, nor is it a way to avoid conflict. Also, it shouldn't be used often, as this increases anxiety and abandonment concerns for the youth. That said, there are certain rules to follow when taking respite for you and for the youth in care.

Rules for Respite? Prepare the youth for Respite. Both the Family Specialist and the Foster Parent should discuss with the youth what the family dynamics of the Respite foster family is like, what the expectations are, and that they can bring what comforts them. They should be able to contact someone they trust either within the regular Foster family, or the Family Specialist. There are also some necessary information that the

Family Specialists need, such as: Routines, transportation agreements, recent behaviors, past history within the Foster home, level of supervision required, if there is a curfew for the youth, if there are allergies, if the youth needs special accommodations (specialized diet, medical needs, etc.), and what the current medications are to include a MAR with level of intervention the Foster family provides for the youth. There is one rule that is incredibly important: You need to give **2 WEEKS NOTICE** in order to fully meet requirements and arrangements. The youth are supposed to meet the Respite family, but this sometimes does not happen due to time constraints and knowledge of who they are already.

What happens if you don't talk to the youth about Respite? Some youth, depending upon past history, will feel abandoned. Some will feel anxious and depressed. Most, even those who do know about Respite, will try to split foster families, by gaining what they can't at the regular home (curfew, electronics time, food choices, etc.).

Who can you call about Respite? **Kesha Taffe, 703.425.9200 x 229. Or you can email at Ktaffe@afgcinc.com**

Family Dynamics and Culture

As a foster parent, you already know that cultural differences can cause imbalance in the dynamic of family life. How it affects the family generally, decision-making, compliance, and successful treatment outcomes are fundamental questions that can be answered. According to Family Specialists at AFGC, these topics are important regarding family and culture when new adolescents are introduced in a home: Individuality vs. Interdependence, Multigenerational vs. Single Family Households, Role Flexibility vs. Role Resistance, and Acculturation vs. Assimilation.

Individuality vs. Interdependence — Strong family relationships have an interdependence that helps improve independence away from home life. However, some of the kids in care have not had strong family relationships, and are much more self-reliant and distrustful of any assistance in matters of decision-making. Help create those bonds, and you will nurture a healthier independence.

Multigenerational vs. Single Family Households — Some of the kids in care come from a multigenerational household, or from a culture that has multiple family members in one small living arrangement. Thus, being in care of a single family household may be confusing for the youth in care. By involving the community, the youth will feel more secure, thereby creating a healthy cultural bond.

Role Flexibility vs. Role Resistance — Culturally, how does the youth in care understand kinship and roles in families? Have they come from a background where the maternal side takes care of everything and everyone, or have they come from a culture which encourages the roles of fathers to be head of household? Was their household flexible or rigid? Can a common language be found with the youth in care about roles of family members?

Acculturation vs. Assimilation — In either case, with acculturation or assimilation, the culture of the youth and the culture of the family changes. However, acculturation means that the youth retains their cultural heritage and practices. It is extremely difficult for a child to automatically assimilate (completely submerge into a culture) upon entry into a home. Create ways to be open to new cultural concepts, and you will create a healthy cultural bond.

Regardless, you are doing a great job. Thank you, Foster Families!

Did You Know....?

All placed AFGC Youth will be given a survey to complete, which is due by **July 15th, 2016**. The answers given on the survey are completely anonymous. Please help your placed adolescent complete the form and send it back in —OR— there is an online link as well:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QBCSM66>



****Foster Parents****

Maintenance Fees have risen by 2%. This means a new contract will be coming soon that is reflective of the new rates. Please call if you have any questions.

The Hidden Needs of Northern Virginia:

There are 85,000 children living in poverty in NoVA.

Nearly 2,000 Northern Virginians are homeless, 60% are children.

“Poverty for a family of three [in NoVa] is defined at about \$25,000. Guess what? About 6% of our population meets that criterion. That may not seem like a high percentage, but when you take the base, about 1.1 million, that’s a lot of people.” — U.S. Rep. Gerry Conolly (D-11)

Nationally, 50% of the homeless population spent time in foster care. Across the nation, there is approximately 400,000 homeless youth, 50% having spent time in foster care.

NoVa teens in foster care need help learning how to manage their lives after they leave foster care, because most end up without homes after aging out.

In The Spotlight!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to

Mike Wiley, Ana Soto, Donald Burns, Janice Gaither, and Florence Campbell!



May all your birthday's be full of joy and laughter. AFGC wishes you the very best!

GET TO KNOW:



Meet *Kesha Taffe*, TFC Admissions & Placement Coord.

Kesha has been with AFGC for more than 10 years. She remains a positive, friendly, and funny person who can lighten up a room. At the same time, she is competitive and knows AFGC upward, backwards and sideways.

This Jamaican-born, American-raised woman is a huge basketball fan, and a MAJOR Redskin fan. She loves to travel, and dreams of going to the Seychelles one day. (Who doesn't?)

Kesha would like you to know that all kids are different even if behaviors are similar. Spending time with them to really understand who they are will enrich both your lives. If you can walk in their shoes, and remember what it is like to be a teenager, it will help with the days that seem full of frustration. We all went through those stages of development! Kesha discussed self-awareness as being of utmost importance, especially because both you and the kids in your care can be triggered by anything. By realizing your own triggers, you can better assess their triggers in a calm manner. She stated that change is hard, but can be accomplished through a process, because change is a process.

No matter what, Kesha always believes the best in people, as well as the kids in your care!

NEXT MONTH: August Foster Parent Birthdays, and Meet AFGC Staff

Earn Training Credits by reading the Newsletter.

Take advantage of this opportunity to make sure you satisfy the 24 hour per year requirement.

This month's newsletter is a little bit different, so please answer the following questions and return to

Leslie Wilcox. The fax number is 703-425-9206.

You can also complete this form at: www.afgcinc.com, under the heading of **NEWS**.

If you take this quiz, it counts for 1 hour of your cultural mandatory training!

Take advantage!

True "T" or False "F"

_____ There are no homeless youth in Northern VA.

_____ There is not a difference between assimilation and acculturation.

_____ Being self-aware can lead to a healthier bond with the youth in care.

_____ Kesha loves the Dallas Cowboys

_____ Kids placed in care are self-reliant and distrustful when they haven't had strong family relationships.

_____ Role flexibility and Role resistance can be a compromise and a discussion with the youth in care.

_____ Most fireworks come from China.

_____ Multigenerational families often confuse youth.

Explain one part of this newsletter that you found interesting:

Name _____





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CREDIBILITY • INTEGRITY • ACHIEVEMENT

JULY 2016

July 4th – Independence Day

July 7th – Tania Alfaro's Birthday – please call and say Happy Birthday!

July 19, 20, 22, and 23rd – Info Sessions about Foster Care at local libraries

Web sites that offer Foster Parent Training Certificates:

www.Fosterparenttraining.com

www.fosterparentcollege.com

www.Fosterparents.com