



**WFAPA**  
 Wisconsin Foster & Adoptive Parent Association, Inc.

**FEBRUARY 2023**

# March 24-26, 2023 Spring Conference

**"NO SUCH THING  
 AS A BAD KID!"**

Understanding and Responding  
 to Children, Youth, and Families  
 Struggling with Emotional and  
 Behavioral Challenges Using a  
 Positive, Trauma-Informed,  
 Strength-Based Approach

**Guest Speaker**

**CHARLIE APPELSTEIN, MSW**

Youth Care Specialist  
 President of Appelstein Training  
 Resources, LLC (ARC)

**"No such thing as  
 a bad kid!"**

**Whaaaat???**



**READ ON**  
 FOR MORE DETAILS



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 12 credits  
 for under  
 \$100!**



# Resources for Youth

**www.FY13.org** – FYI3 stands for youth who are involved, informed and independent. It's a comprehensive, youth-oriented site with information, advice, and interactive features for young people leaving foster care. A useful glossary of foster care terms is available at <http://www.fyi.com/fyi3/informed/Glossary/index.cfm>.

**www.YouthComm.org** – Youth Communication is the publisher of Represent, a monthly magazine for youth in care, written and edited by youth. Each issue covers issues that youth in care deal with all the time like mental health, money woes, and navigating the foster care system.

**www.MockingbirdSociety.org** – The Mockingbird Society is an independent, non-profit organization that is dedicated to improving the safety, quality of life and future of the children and adolescents living in the foster care/group home system nationwide. They publish the newspaper *The Mockingbird Times*, which is written by youth in care.

**National Foster Youth Advisory Council** – The National Foster Youth Advisory Council (NFYAC) is a diverse national group of current and former foster youth and adult supporters from several states who have had direct experience with the child welfare systems. The council's purpose is to provide a voice for and make a difference in the lives of youth currently in care and support their successful transitions into adulthood.

**The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative®** works to ensure that young people – ages 14 to 26 – in the United States who have spent at least one day in foster care after their 14th birthday have the resources, relationships and opportunities to achieve well-being and success. [www.aecf.org/work/child-welfare/jim-casey-youth-opportunities-initiative](http://www.aecf.org/work/child-welfare/jim-casey-youth-opportunities-initiative)

**www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/ys/leadership - Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council - YAC** The Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council (YAC) began in 2005 and consists of former and current youth in the foster care system who provide a voice for all foster care youth in Wisconsin.

**Youth Leadership Teams** Youth Leadership Teams (YLT) consists of young people ages 14 up to 21 who have personal experience with the youth justice system. As a team, the goal is to work with the Department of Children and Families on improving the youth justice system.



## ADOPTION QUILT

We are making another WFAPA Quilt and if you have adopted a child or you were an adopted child, we would like to hear from you. We recognize each adoption story is as varied as the individuals involved. Adopting a child is such a powerful, emotional experience and like pregnancy and birth, no two adoption stories are the same.



At our Spring Conference, we will have tables set up with blank cloth squares. Throughout the conference, anyone attending who has adopted a child(ren) or has been adopted will be invited to color and create — making their own masterpiece. Along with creating your work of art, we ask that you write a short article about what your adoption means to you with no identifying information.

You can also reach out to Sherry Benson, WFAPA Treasurer and Social Worker Liaison, and she will mail you a blank cloth square and fabric markers, with return postage. Again, we ask that you write a short article about what your adoption means to you with no identifying information and mail this along with your quilt square and markers. You can reach Sherry by calling or texting her at (715) 923-1124 or by emailing her at [misssherry2@yahoo.com](mailto:misssherry2@yahoo.com).

Once we have a collection of these beautiful creations, they will be woven together with other quilt squares. With each creation, our quilt becomes bigger and stronger. Once completed, the quilt and the stories that go along with it, be displayed to raise awareness about adoption and celebrate amazing children and their families.



[wfapa.org](http://wfapa.org)



## Reading for all!

Any reading level, any topic, any place and time— we've got your family covered with the perfect plan to fit your needs. They have two plans—Basic (free) or Unlimited.

Epic is the leading digital reading platform—built on a collection of 40,000+ popular, high-quality books from 250+ of the world's best publishers—that safely fuels curiosity and reading confidence for kids 12 and under.

For more information, please visit their website at [www.getepic.com](http://www.getepic.com).

# WFAPA PRESENTS:

## "No Such Thing as a bad kid!"

**Understanding and Responding to Children,  
Youth, and Families Struggling with Emotional  
and Behavioral Challenges Using a Positive,  
Trauma-Informed, Strength-Based Approach**

Some topics include:

- The effects of trauma and positive emotions on the brain; how and why to create trauma-informed treatment environments
- Changing negative mindsets and the deleterious effects of pejorative labeling
- Strength-based communication principles and techniques
- Self-esteem building & activities for at-risk children and youth; how to help cognitively inflexible young people
- The importance of controlling personal emotions (i.e. managing number one first)
- Core strength-based verbal interventions including de-escalation techniques



**GUEST SPEAKER:**

**CHARLIE APPELSTEIN, MSW**

Youth Care Specialist President  
of Appelstein Training  
Resources, LLC (ARC)

**REGISTER ONLINE TODAY  
AT WFAPA.ORG OR  
COMPLETE THE ENCLOSED  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**EVENT WILL BE HELD AT:**



**Three Bears Resort in Warren, WI.**

# MARCH 24-26, 2023



**EARN 12 CREDITS FOR  
UNDER \$100.00**



**DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS  
& LEARN ABOUT HELPFUL  
RESOURCES**



**MEET NEW FOSTER &  
ADOPTIVE PARENTS**



**NETWORKING**

# The Rise of Teen Suicide: What you Need to Know about Suicide Attempts During Covid 19



CDC saw 51% increase in suicide attempts by adolescent girls during pandemic. The attempts by teens to commit suicide during the Covid Lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 has risen dramatically, according to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Girls between the ages of 12 to 17 were found to have tried to attempt suicide increased by roughly 51% in early 2021 than the same time frame in 2019, pre-Covid. In addition, boys in the same age group had a 4% increase of suicide attempts, as well. The CDC study indicated that the rise of suicide attempt in teens might be attributed to a "lack of connectedness to schools, teachers and peers" due to physical distancing measures, "barriers to health treatment," "increases in substance abuse" and anxiety related to "family health and economic problems." In addition, the rise of child abuse for children and teens during Covid is also a factor.

As the Covid 19, or Coronavirus pandemic, kept children and families inside during a time of self isolation, more children faced the risk of abuse and neglect while at home. "When families are forced to be isolated and their incomes potentially limited I think it's going to create a lot more stress for families that are already volatile," said Kim Garrett, CEO of Palomar, Oklahoma City's family justice center. Indeed, Garrett believes that this time of self isolation may very well "increase domestic violence and child abuse". Psychiatrists and other doctors who work with children agree that the pandemic has created a "perfect storm of stressors for kids, increasing the risk of suicide for many."

**For many of today's teens, social media is an outlet they are turning to as they consider suicide.**

Yet, the rate of suicide among children and teens has been on the rise for a number of years. Tragically, suicide for children under the age of 13 is not as uncommon as one might think. According to a report from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of suicide for children between the ages of 5-13 has risen to once every 3.4 days. Indeed, according to the World Health Organization, nearly 800,000 people die due to suicide every year, which is one person every 40 seconds.

**Article continued on page 11**



## FASPP SAAN

### Foster and Adoptive Support and Preservation Program Surviving Allegations of Abuse and Neglect



FASPP's mission is to meet the needs of foster and adoptive parents statewide through a network of peer driven support and information which will help to preserve foster and adoptive families. Are you feeling lost? Do you need information? Are you under an investigation? If so, FASPP may be able to help! Our FASPP and SAAN volunteers are highly trained to provide you with information and/or resources to guide you through various issues. FASPP and SAAN is made up of fellow foster or adoptive parents.

SAAN is a peer driven support network, the purpose of which is to minimize the trauma to foster and adoptive families while undergoing an allegation without compromising the integrity of that investigation. Foster parents welcome children into their homes knowing that they bring their histories and issues along with them.

For this reason, foster and adoptive parents are at a

higher risk of having an allegation made against them. Undergoing an investigation is a stressful and scary situation for anyone, and SAAN is here to provide information to support you throughout the investigation process.

Please call or email the following people with questions in these areas:

Norma, Chairperson (Advice on general/allegations)  
Phone: (920) 922-9627

Melissa (Focuses on fostering younger children)  
Phone: (608) 333-6650 Email: lovedalemelissa@gmail.com

Tammy (Advice on general/foster)  
Phone: (715) 497-3561 Email: tmeesha1973@yahoo.com

Lauri (Advice on general/adoption)  
Phone: (715) 816-4152 Email: lthorsen@gmail.com

## Support Our Work By Becoming A Member

WFAPA's Leadership has helped to educate policymakers and engage Foster and Adoptive Parents in the debate on issues that affect the Foster and Adoptive System.

We'd love you to join us on our adventure! We couldn't continue to play a role in influencing public policy and advocating on behalf of Foster and Adoptive children and parents in Wisconsin without our members.

One of the best ways to acquire our collective voice is to create a strong community among foster, adoptive and kinship families.

### Our members:

- Receive four newsletters each year.
- Get first hand information of what's happening at the State level.
- Who you can call when an allegation arises.
- Peer Support.
- Scholarship information.
- Reduced rate for conferences.
- Opportunities to become involved in projects to help foster children.

There are two ways you can join. Either go to our website, wfapa.org, and click on Membership or you can fill out the attached Membership Form and mail it along with \$10.00 per adult to: Michelle Ward, W7018 Discovery Drive, Fond du Lac, WI 54937.

## WFAPA Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to help out with WFAPA? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

County, State or Agency Name (that licenses you):

Additional Donation: \$5 \_\_\_\_ \$10 \_\_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_\_

\$50 \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_

GO GREEN! \_\_\_\_ I'd like to "go green" & paperless by receiving my newsletter online only.

**BECOME A MEMBER**



# MAMA KASCH'S KITCHEN

## HOT CRAB DIP RECIPE

### Ingredients

- 8 ounce cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1 cup grated pepper jack cheese
- 1 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup minced onion
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon Tabasco sauce, or other hot sauce
- 1 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 pound jumbo lump crab, picked over for shells

### Directions

- Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.
- In a large bowl, beat together the cream cheese, mayonnaise and sour cream with a hand mixer until smooth.
- Stir in the pepper jack, cheddar, onion, garlic, Worcestershire, Tabasco, lemon juice, salt and pepper until thoroughly combined.
- Fold in the crab and transfer to a small baking dish.
- Bake in the oven for 20-25 minutes until golden brown and bubbling.
- Serve hot with crackers, crostini or vegetables.



Prep Time: 10 Minutes  
Cook Time: 20 Minutes  
Total Time: 30 minutes

# Schedule

This Conference Counts for 12 Hours of Training/CEU'S for Attendees.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 24TH

- 4:00PM - 9:00PM Registration (Auction/Raffle Items and Raffle Tickets)  
 4:00PM - 9:00PM Hospitality Room/Auction Items ~ Food Available  
 5:00PM - 6:00PM Meet The Board  
 6:00PM - 9:00PM Hospitality Room Food/Socialize - Connecting, networking, socialize, relax, eat, meet foster folks, and share stories

## SATURDAY, MARCH 25TH

- 7:45AM - 8:45AM Breakfast  
 9:00AM - 11:00AM Advocacy 101 Foster & Adoptive Parents - Judy Olmanson CSW, M.A.,M.A.T.  
 11:00AM - 11:15AM Break  
 11:15AM - 11:45AM To Be Announced  
 11:45AM - 1:00PM Lunch  
 1:00PM - 3:00PM No Such Thing As A Bad Kid - Charlie Applestein, MSW  
 3:00PM - 3:15PM Break  
 3:15PM - 4:15PM No Such Thing As A Bad Kid - Charlie Applestein, MSW  
 4:15PM - 5:30PM General Membership Meeting ~ Drawing For Free Conference And Room, Surveys Turned In, & Certificates Handed Out  
 6:00PM - 10:00PM Banquet, Auction, and Raffle



## SUNDAY, MARCH 26TH

9:00AM - 12:00PM FASPP & BOARD MEMBERS ONLY Closed To General Membership.

A block of rooms has been reserved at \$82.00 (not including local & state taxes). All rooms include waterpark wristbands. **The last day to reserve your room is on March 10, 2023.** For reservations, please call Three Bears Resort in Warrens, WI at 608-378-2500 and ask for Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association block.

# Life Begins Here

WFAPA is supporting a program to help Foster children aging out of care. This program provides a suitcase filled with items to help them as they start out living independently. WFAPA donates the suitcase(s) to an organization in the community that works with foster children aging-out-of-care or to the Department of Human Services in that county.

At each conference that WFAPA holds we ask our members via the newsletter to bring in "gently" used or new items that will be helpful for someone just starting out such as; towels, dishes, pans, silverware, cups, coffee pot, sheet sets, blankets, pillows, etc. Thank you.

Thank you Meyer Manufacturing Corporation for your donation!

THANK YOU!



Meyer Manufacturing Corporation is a leading producer of farm equipment including: manure spreaders, forage boxes, live floor ag boxes & semi-trailers, bunk feeders, delivery boxes, vertical TMR mixers, flat racks and Rocky mineral feeders.

WFAPA's Spring Conference  
 24-26 MARCH 2023 • THREE BEARS RESORT



# Conference Registration Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  WFAPA Member  Non-WFAPA Member

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

County You Are Licensed With (**REQUIRED**): \_\_\_\_\_

Is this your first conference?  Yes  No

I am bringing a first time attendee  Yes  No If yes, Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Conference Registration includes workshops, hospitality room and meals on Saturday. Complimentary breakfast is available at the hotel. Buffett meals will be served at lunch and at the banquet. **If you have any dietary restrictions, please call Tracey Taylor at 715-560-0755 so she may make proper food arrangements for you.**

Complimentary Breakfast	Lunch Buffett	Supper Buffett	Conference Registration
# of Conference Attendees _____	# of Conf. Attendees _____	# of Conf. Attendees _____	# of WFAPA Members _____
# of Non-Participants _____	# of Non-Participants _____	# of Non-Participants _____	# of Non-Members _____
Cost: Free	Cost: \$10.00 Non-Participant	\$20.00 Per Non-Participant	Member's Cost \$85.00 each Non-Member's Cost: \$95.00 each
Amount Owed: \$0.00	Amount Owed: \$ ____ .00	Amount Owed: \$ ____ .00	Amount Owed: \$ ____ .00

**No childcare is available for this conference.** Due to the sensitive nature of many of our discussions, children are discouraged from being present in training sessions. Infants are welcome, but please be sensitive to other attendees by removing fussy or noisy babies.

**Total Amount Owed: \$ \_\_\_\_ .00**

You can make secure payments with your Debit/Credit Card on our website, [www.wfapa.org](http://www.wfapa.org). If you prefer to pay by check, please make check payable to WFAPA and mail your payment to Tracey Taylor, P.O. Box 381, Owen, WI 54460. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Tracy Taylor at 715-560-1755 or [taylor1028@charter.net](mailto:taylor1028@charter.net). There will be a \$20.00 service fee for all checks returned for insufficient funds. There are no refunds.

I grant permission for WFAPA to use my personal image (photo) and name in any form of media for promotional and any other lawful purposes. WFAPA acknowledges that the images may be used on the organization's website, Facebook, social media, flyers, publications, and that there will be NO payment for the use of the photographs, names or any other forms of media for promotional purposes. This releases WFAPA from any infringement or violation of personal and/or property rights of any sort whatsoever based upon the use of your photo(s), and further acknowledges that WFAPA is not obliged to use the photographs.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Additional Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# 11 TIPS FOR FIRST TIME FOSTER PARENTS

Are you a new foster parent? And are you anxiously awaiting your first placement? I remember that mix of excitement, fear of the unknown, and nervous energy well.

## 1. Have Your Support Network in Place

It took us ages to get background checks run on friends and family members due to a local backlog. See if you can submit any necessary information now. (We needed full names, addresses, and social security numbers.)

Look into whether there are local foster parent support groups near you. A friend connected me to one that's been a lifeline during tough times over the past few years. And there are a lot of excellent Facebook groups. A few of my favorites are Foster the Family Foster Parent Support and Culturally Fluent Families.

## 2. Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help

Your friends and family want to support you through this journey, but they often don't know what you need. Accept any offers to provide meals. And speak up when you need something. Friends are often happy to grab diapers, etc. when they're out running errands. And it's better for the little ones in your care to keep their world small, quiet and calm during those first few hours and days.

## 3. Routines Are Your Friend

These kids are traumatized and don't know what to expect next. Narrate your day. Let them know the schedule and what is planned. Picture charts are a useful tool for toddlers and little ones.

## 4. Know Which Family Rules are Non-Negotiable

Share these with the children joining your family and work with them to add any rules they feel are important. You don't want to overwhelm the kids, but you do need to be clear about your expectations.

It doesn't matter how basic you think something is – the children may never have had that rule before.

## 5. Expect That Meal Times, Bath Times, and Bedtimes will be Tough

Try to anticipate challenges in advance. How can you make their space cozy and inviting? Do you have night lights and noise machines on hand if needed? Feeding issues are par for the course. Having healthy snacks on hand and visible will go a long way towards building trust and allaying fears.

## 6. Get Organized Early

Make a binder for each child. Store important paperwork from the social worker. You'll be asked about background info a lot, so you'll want to have it accessible. And you'll need to keep medical encounter forms organized. Add some blank pages to jot down questions you'd like to ask the social worker at the next visit, or that come up during medical appointments.

## 7. Take Some Time to Nest

In the last trimester of a pregnancy, it's totally normal to feel an urge to prepare for baby. It can help to prepare for the arrival of a foster child in the same way. Clear out clutter and make some easy freezer meals to have on hand. Pick up children's toothbrushes and toothpaste, tub toys, a couple stuffed animals, and snuggly blankets.

There's no need to rush out and buy everything up front, but it helped me feel like I was doing something during the waiting period to pick up a few items. And the time between the call and placement of your first little one can be chaotic – I was so glad we had some basics on hand.

## 8. Let the Children Have Some Control

Their world has just been rocked. Try to find out their favorite snacks, personal care products, etc. Let them pick a toothbrush and stuffed animal to sleep with. Give them simple choices at meal time (i.e. pizza or mac & cheese?).

## 9. Make Time for Self Care

Helping kids process trauma is hard, really hard. You need to take care of yourself so that you can be at your best for them. Sometimes that means finding a therapist you can talk with and sometimes it's squeezing in time for coffee with friends. But whatever you choose, make sure you make the time. Check out this article on 35 Self Care Ideas for Times of Stress for inspiration.

## 10. Let the Child Know You're Willing to Talk

Don't pressure them, but letting them know that you're there to listen if they want to talk can go a long way. Ask questions like "Is there anything I can get for you?", "How are you feeling?" and

"What do you like to do for fun?" It's important they feel seen and heard.

## 11. Foster Parenting Will be Easier and Harder Than You Think

You will fall in love with many of the children in your care. As with parenting biological children, there will be easy days and hard days. You'll be changed by the experience – there's no way to un-see or unlearn the things you will come across. The system will frustrate you, but you will also be awed by the dedication of some of the social workers you cross paths with. Foster parenting will inevitably be bitter sweet, but it will be also be one of the most rewarding and challenging experiences of your life.

Thinking through the big questions and having routines in place will help you when the chaos of adjusting to your first foster placement hits. With time, your family will settle into a new routine and a new normal. Welcome to the world of foster parenting and best of luck with your first foster placement!

Article taken from [stackingcents.com/tips-for-first-time-foster-parents](http://stackingcents.com/tips-for-first-time-foster-parents).

## WFAPA BOARD OPENINGS

We have the following positions open on the board: Fund Raiser Chair and Grant Writer Chair. If you are interested, please contact Tina Christopherson at [twfapa@new.rr.com](mailto:twfapa@new.rr.com) or (715) 938-6667.

These positions are voluntary; however, you receive a free t-shirt, polo shirt,

hoodie, free lodging at conferences, fun, and us! We welcome you with open arms. Go ahead! Contact me and get involved in your organization.





# WANTED

WFAPA works hard every year empowering, supporting, advocating, and providing resources for foster and adoptive families. Our work is so important to us, and the strides we have made so far would not have been possible without supporters.

Will your company consider becoming a sponsor of WFAPA? You can make a one-time, yearly donation of \$300.00 or a monthly donation of \$25.00 for one year. Since we are a 501(c)(3) (C), your donation is tax deductible.

Not only will your company benefit through the positive publicity of supporting our mission and organization, WFAPA helps you achieve this publicity by promoting your business:

- On our website, [www.wfapa.org](http://www.wfapa.org),
- On our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/wfapa](http://www.facebook.com/wfapa),
- Through social media,
- In our newsletters, which are published four times a year, and
- At our Spring and Fall Conference.

If your company is interested in being a sponsor, please reach to us. For more information, go to our website, [www.wfapa.org](http://www.wfapa.org), click on Support Our Work, and then click on Sponsors. We can't wait to hear from you!



## A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR



**FROM YOUR VACATION SPECIALIST**  
MEGAN & JOSH ROBERTS  
(715) 907-1270 WESTON, WI

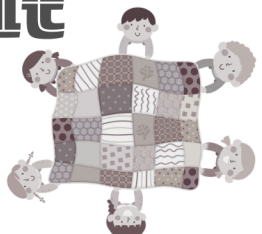


As a recent breast cancer survivor, Josh and I have really realigned our priorities. Family, memories & time away are things that topped the list. We love travel and think it is so important. We'd love to help you, your family and your loved ones make some memories and make travel a priority too!

### From Your Vacation Specialist: Dream Vacations

As a recent breast cancer survivor, Megan and Josh Roberts, have really realigned their priorities. Family, memories & time away are things that topped the list. They love travel and think it is so important. They would love to help you, your family and your loved ones make some memories and make travel a priority too! For more information, you can contact them at (715) 907-1270 or visit their website at [mmroberts.dreamvacations.com](http://mmroberts.dreamvacations.com).

# WFAPA'S Foster Care Quilt



This project is dedicated to all the children who have suffered from abuse and neglect. The last block is left blank to remember these children who have suffered and died; those not protected by the system.

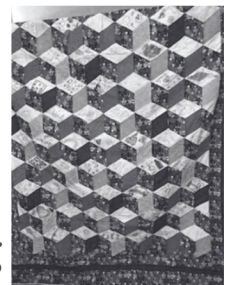
The inspiration for this undertaking began following foster care involvement and heartache. It seemed fitting to share stories of other children in the foster care system, so each county in the State of Wisconsin was contacted. A quilt block was sent with a request for a drawing from a child in foster care or adopted along with their story.

One thing led to another, and we felt there needed to be an awareness to the multitude of children brought into the system, some background of how they came into the system and their experiences while in the system. As you read, their stories are compelling, some of success, some of heart break, some are on-going, but all are children wanting a good home, to be loved, and to know there is someone who cares just for them. All of the stories shared the turmoil, the uncertainty, and obstacles the children, birth families and some foster/adoptive families encountered. This made the Tumbling Block, the quilt block of choice for this project.

There are over a half million children every day in foster care in the United States finding shelter from abuse. There are many, many children waiting for a loving, safe family to call their own. Please consider opening your heart and home.

We owe them as a society, as human beings, to care for these children-sooner than later. The system statistics of successes seem to be inconsistent with the stories told here. Please contact your State Senator, Representatives, the Governor and local government to seek needed reforms and guidelines to make true success stories.

If you or your organization would like to borrow the quilt and the stories that go along with it for a display, please contact: WFAPA Public Relation's Chair, Melinda Kasch, 8912 Sadler Dr., Wind Lake, WI 53185. Phone: (262) 895-2652 Email: [mkasch@wi.rr.com](mailto:mkasch@wi.rr.com). The quilt will be sent to you free of charge with return postage included.



THE QUILT OF MANY STORIES

# VOICE

## Discussing Issues and Concerns of Michigan Foster Youth

It's your 18th birthday, but instead of getting presents and cake, you're told to pack your bags and get out of the house. As depressing as that sounds, that is the reality for 23,000 kids who age out of the foster care system every year. Today, more than half a million children in America live in foster care. This year alone, 20,000 of us will "age out" of foster care, typically at age 18.

In Michigan 1,600 youth age out every year. For years, if not our entire lifetimes, our "parents" have been state or county foster care agencies, and now, overnight, we are on our own. We are disproportionately youth of color. Though most 18 year-old youth coming from intact families can expect emotional and financial support for years to come, once we turn 18, the state is no longer legally obligated to provide any assistance, and often does not.

Although you, as the state, have taken custody and become our parents somehow you have come to accept the "myth" that our independence begins at age 18. Consequently, many of us aging out of foster care struggle to become self-sufficient. But it does not have to be this way. Communities and policymakers have it in their power to improve conditions for us.

Although we have tremendous resiliency and optimism, our outcomes are better when supports and opportunities are tailored to our specific needs. We're no different! Stop discrimination now!



**I don't care what it takes. I will help one another on my way through life. I survive only when "we" survive.**

In 2003, the Department of Human Services received a grant from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI). Of the twelve JCYOI grantees in the country, Michigan's is the only grant awarded to a public child welfare agency. JCYOI is looking to Michigan as a model for the country of how public will and policy can be influenced by the voices of youth.

As part of Michigan's support to us, we have formed 13 youth boards comprised of and led by us – youth in foster care or alumni of foster care, and supported by the JCYOI grant. We have been working in our counties and together across the state to raise awareness about the issues of older youth in care

## 15 STATEMENTS FROM THE YOUTH BOARD

Foster youth should be part of the decision making process every time there is a change in placement. We are moved so many times that it is difficult to keep any relationship with our friends or family. Often our moves are without any warning to us and we can't understand why. Sometimes the move is so fast we can't even say goodbye to our friends. We change schools so many times that we often can't graduate on time.

- We should be included in every decision made about us. Nothing about us without us!
- Make sure we are present at every court hearing and agency meeting.
- Caseworkers and foster parents need to be trained about the special needs of teenagers. We think this would encourage them to work through some of the problems we may have with a placement. Sometimes our behavior is just typical teenager.
- This should be in the state's Program Improvement Plan (PIP).
- We need an advocate with us at the decision making meetings. Often having a peer advocate is as important as anything else.
- We are so accustomed to not being heard that many of us have stopped trying. We need to know that you are really going to listen!
- Be clear with the ground rules. Everyone gets their say but it doesn't necessarily mean everyone gets their way.
- Please expand Family to Family across the state. This builds a relationship with the worker and youth, teaches responsibility and reduces acting out and AWOL.
- Many of us love our birth parents very much and we wish the state put as much effort into saving our families as they do into removing and placing us in care.

Excerpt taken from the Article, [15 Statements From The Youth Board](http://michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/fyit/DHS-Voice1-Foster-Youth.pdf?rev=6776f9de8f5a412c8b7980342c586bf3). To read the full article, go to [michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/fyit/DHS-Voice1-Foster-Youth.pdf?rev=6776f9de8f5a412c8b7980342c586bf3](http://michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/fyit/DHS-Voice1-Foster-Youth.pdf?rev=6776f9de8f5a412c8b7980342c586bf3)



## Continuation of The Rise of Teen Suicide: What you Need to Know about Suicide Attempts During Covid 19 from Page 4

To the surprise of many, suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds in the United States, with roughly 5,000 teens taking their lives each year. Furthermore, at least 25 suicides are attempted by teens for every complete suicide. A study by the National Center for Health Statistics found that the rate of suicides in teenage girls has reached a 40 year high, while suicides among teen boys has also increased. But why such high numbers? Why are teens at risk to suicide?

At least 90% of teens who kill themselves, according to The American Academy of Pediatrics, have some type of mental health problem. This may include alcohol or drug abuse, anxiety, behavior problems, and depression. Indeed, these troubled youth also often have challenges and problems at school or with friends or family. For some, it is a combination of both. In addition, many of those teens that do commit suicide were victims of bullying, including cyberbullying, and of physical or sexual abuse. Along with this, there is often also a lack of a support network of some kind for the teen, as well as a poor relationship with parents and family members.

There are children who feel as if there is nowhere to turn to. For many of today's teens, social media is an outlet they are turning to as they consider suicide. Perhaps one of the most disturbing trends online is that of the pro suicide sites that can easily be found on the internet. These sites offer suggestions on how to commit suicide, or as one site put it, "to find the final exit". Online users can find suggestions on how to kill themselves while asleep, in front of others, in the privacy of a bedroom, or even through the use of over the counter medication. For those children who are suffering through great bouts of depression, these sites offer advice and suggestions from "pro suicide experts," as well as from others who try to encourage the depressed victims to end their lives. Adding additional confusion to these potential victims is the fact the many

of these sites suggest that suicide is a positive solution to their problems, or even a spiritual release to their pain and struggle. For a child looking for help or encouragement, this type of encouragement may be the answer they are looking for.

Children in foster care are also at risk of suicide. To be sure, these are all issues that children in foster care face and struggle with on a daily basis. According to one study, adolescents who had been in foster care were nearly two and a half times more likely to seriously consider suicide than other youth. The same study also found that adolescents who had been in foster care were nearly four times more likely to have attempted suicide than other youth.

For those teens who are considering suicide, it is important to recognize the warning signs. Many times, youth who are contemplating suicide will often talk about the act, or about death, in general. Along with this, they may also talk about feelings of hopelessness. They may suggest to others that they may not be around much longer, through talking with others, in letters, poems, or even music. During this time, those youth thinking about suicide may also begin to isolate themselves from both friends and family, and even begin to give away important possessions of theirs to others. There is often a loss of interest in school, sports, and family activities. Others may begin to show signs of changes in their normal eating and sleeping behaviors, while others may begin to take part in risky or dangerous behaviors.

### **There are children who feel as if there is nowhere to turn to.**

Indeed, as you read this, there are those teens who are considering suicide as a release of their pain, their abuse, their trauma. It is time that those in society decide to help. For those looking for help or for more information, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line. Article written by Dr. John DeGarmo on September 19th from [drjohndegarmo.medium.com](http://drjohndegarmo.medium.com)



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For a listing of our Board Members, please go to our website, [wfapa.org](http://wfapa.org).

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**Do I have to put my foot down?**

### Amazon Users-SMILE PROGRAM

When shopping on Amazon, don't forget to use the Amazon Smile Program! Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible Amazon Smile purchases to WFAPA whenever you shop on Amazon Smile. Amazon Smile is the same Amazon you know - same products, same prices, same service.

SUPPORT WFAPA by starting your shopping @smile.amazon.com. WFAPA thanks you!!



# ADVOCACY 101 FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS



## No Longer Fostering Or You Have Questions? We Would Love To Hear From You.

We are interested to learn about families leaving foster care and the reasons behind their decision. This information can assist us to advocate for future policies to support foster families. If you are a former foster parent, please take a moment to provide feedback on your foster care experience.

Also, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact WFAPA President, Tina Christopherson at twfapa@new.rr.com.

At our upcoming conference in March, Judy Olmanson CSW, M.A., M.A.T., is going to be talking with us about Advocacy with foster and adoptive parents. Advocacy is at the heart of change, the product of passion, commitment and the desire to influence policy and/or practice. Advocacy brings about positive change for individuals and society as a whole. Foster and adoptive parents are often called upon to be advocates for the children in their care, whether it be with the child welfare system, schools, mental health services, medical services, or local and state governments. This workshop will provide foster and adoptive parents with the essential skills necessary for you to be an effective advocate in a variety of settings.

Judy is a Public Adoption Social Worker for Lutheran Social Services as well as an Instructor for the University of WI-Milwaukee's Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System teaching the adoption classes. With more than three decades of work experience in the Wisconsin Human/Social Services field (as well as in Minnesota and Tennessee), she is committed to serving and advocating for vulnerable populations.

## 8 Impactful Ways to Help Foster Kids in Your Community

Over 402,000 children were in the foster care system in 2021. That's a lot of kids who could use your help. But knowing that foster children need help is not the same thing as knowing how to help foster kids. Foster care needs are both broad and complex. That's why, when people ask us, "How can I help a foster child?", the answer isn't just one thing. There are several different ways to help foster kids. To help you understand how you can help, we have put together this quick and simple guide on how to help foster children.

### How To Help Foster Kids Right Now

If you're like most people, when you see a problem — especially one that affects children — you want to be a part of the solution. We're here to help you become a part of the solution. Here are eight ways you can help foster kids today.

#### 1. Become a Foster Parent

The most direct and impactful way to address foster care needs is to become a foster parent. By fostering a child, you provide a secure and caring home for a child in need. You automatically remove a child from the system, give them care, and free up resources for the foster system to help more children. If you're wondering how to help foster kids in your community, becoming a foster parent is one of the most rewarding and beneficial actions you can take. Learn more about how to become a foster parent on the A World For Children website.

#### 2. Become a Foster Grandparent

If you're an older adult who maybe isn't

quite set up to become a full-fledged foster parent but would still like to help out, you can. You can apply to become a foster grandparent. Foster grandparents serve as mentors, supporters, and friends to children in the foster system. It may not be as comprehensive as becoming a foster parent, but make no mistake — companionship and mentorship are desperately needed in the foster system, and you can help out with just a little bit of your time each week.

#### 3. Donate to Foster Organizations

We get it — the average person is so busy that they struggle to even take care of all of the have-tos in their lives as they currently are. It doesn't mean you don't want to know how to help foster children; it just means you're worried that you don't have the time to give.

#### 4. Raise Funds for Foster Care Needs

You can also help by contributing to fundraising efforts on behalf of foster care organizations. Whether it's a simple social media-based request for donations or a full-fledged fundraising campaign, every dollar makes a difference in a child's life.

#### 5. Become a Court-Appointed Special Advocate

If you're an action-oriented person, one of the best ways to help foster kids is to become a court-appointed special advocate (CASA). This is a national program that allows volunteers to advocate for children who have been neglected or abused. While this program isn't specific to children in foster care, it

often involves children in the foster care system.

#### 6. Do Respite Care

Maybe you can't commit to full-time foster care, but what about a weekend here and there? That's exactly what you provide when you agree to do respite care. Families who foster children can take a break, and you get to provide an occasional weekend home for a foster child.

#### 7. Provide a Work Experience

Are you a business owner or someone who may have an influence on internships or hiring decisions? Maybe you can help a teenager in the foster system by providing a part-time job, internship, or other work experience. Often, this kind of experience in teenage years is a springboard into a successful career and financial stability in adulthood.

#### 8. Be a Driver

Children in foster care often have to go back and forth to various meetings and check-ins, and they rarely have their own transportation. You can help out in a small but impactful way by volunteering with your local foster care organization as a driver.

Article taken from website A World For Children. It was written by AWFCPERMALINK and was posted on April 15, 2022. <https://www.awfc.org/how-to-help-foster-kids/>