



OUR MISSION:

As a visible expression of God's loving community and consistent with the example of Jesus Christ, Caritas Family Solutions provides direct services to persons of all backgrounds with social and emotional needs across the continuum of life.

May 2014



Foster Parent NEWS

WHY YOU DO WHAT YOU DO NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

As we considered possible methods to recognize foster parents for National Foster Care Month, we searched for words which would describe the ways in which our foster parents must open their hearts to children. The following post was written by blogger **daddystractor** on 02/24/2014 at www.daddystractor.com. While it takes a great amount of patience, dedication, and love to be a foster parent, it seems that the most difficult part of the process is simply opening one's heart to a child that may or may not end up with the foster family for the rest of their life. From all of us at Caritas Family Solutions, we want to thank each and every one of you for taking these difficult leaps of faith. Without our foster parents, we would not be able to make a difference in these young lives. You are truly the "MVP" of our agency, and the effort which you put forth is very much appreciated!

I understand that. I really do. And maybe I can explain it to you and maybe I can't. I went through a process to get here myself. Basically it boils down to this: Love is always worth it.

But to open yourself up for heartbreak? People tell me "I couldn't do that." Well, I've said that too, so coming from the other side, and with no malice, let me just say, yes. Yes, you could. We choose not to.

I mean, there's nothing glamorous about it. You voluntarily allow a child into your home whose parents are probably less than stellar. They come with lice (or worse). They don't know how to eat at the table properly. They probably cry for parents you wish could be locked up for decisions they've made. It means child services in your home, scrutinizing you in ways no one does for a biological child.

But take a second to consider the alternative. Where else would they be? A fellow foster parent recently posted to her Facebook page, "We don't do it because we aren't afraid of heartbreak, but because we are afraid of what would happen to them without us." Pretty much.

The Heartbreak of Foster Care

I've gotten a lot of questions recently: lots of funny looks and tiny head shakes. It's not something I write about on the blog, but since there's interest, I'll answer. People don't get why I've opened up my home to a foster child.

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WHY YOU DO WHAT YOU DO (CONT.)

Foster kids are generally at the bottom of the social ladder. Who really wants these kids? Less than a week after the ink dried on our license, I was holding a five month old in the middle of the night, tears streaming down my face as I both fed him a bottle and scrolled through my Pinterest account looking at pictures of Prince George. Just a few months apart, but the world ADORES the Prince of Cambridge. No one wanted the tiny life in my arms. He literally was "the least of these."

In the hard moments that's what I cling to. This little guy isn't just a foster child. He's my little piece of Jesus, right here in my house. But apart from all of that, people still want to know. Will I get my heart broken? It already is. His tiny smile and great big losses. The phone calls for another child who needs a home. Every news report. Every Amber alert. All heart breaking.

If he goes back to his bio parents I'll cry because I will have lost him. If we adopt him I'll cry because he will have lost his bio parents.

Heartbreak is really just part of living. But hopefully I'm teaching all my kids a really important lesson. Be compassionate. Take care of those who are weaker than you. Share. And love. Because I've looked into the eyes of an unwanted child and I know. It's always worth it.

2014 SUMMER CAMPS FOR KIDS

Adapt 4 Autism

Day Camp: Tues. June 17th and Thurs. July 31st

Overnight Camp: June 26th-28th

Swimming Lessons: July 7th-11th

For more information or registration, please visit: adapt4autism.org

P.T.O.E.C. Summer Camp

Ages: 5-21 *Dates:* June 2nd-June 20th *Hours:* 9:00am-2:00pm; Located at Central Jr. High School, Belleville, IL. Contact your worker for registration information

UPC Heartland: Camp Free To Be

For children with special needs; *Dates:* July 28th – August 8th; *Hours:* 8:30 am -4:00pm; Located at New Rivers Assembly of God Church, 2620 North Center Street, Maryville, IL 62062; Please contact Fiona Plunk at 618-288-2218 or plunkf@upcheartland.org

Camp Quackers

Hosted by Belleville Parks and Recreation Dept.

Ages: K-6th grade; *Dates:* June 8th-August 14th; *Hours:* 9:00a.m. – 3:00p.m. with extended hours from 7:00a.m. – 6:00p.m.; Located at Bellevue Park; For additional information or registration call 618-233-1416

RULES REMINDER

FIREARMS & AMMUNITION

In light of Illinois' recent Conceal and Carry laws, foster parents should be reminded that there are very strict guidelines regarding firearms and ammunition. If your family ever obtains firearms, your licensing worker needs to be made aware immediately as we need to approve the safety and storage plan. The licensing standard applies to all licensed foster family homes. While a more specific rule is being created for this situation, foster parents CANNOT carry or conceal a weapon in the presence of foster children. Since it is an individual's choice to be a foster parent, the rule supersedes the law. If you have any

questions please feel free to contact your licensing specialist or the licensing coordinator, Mary Savage.

402.8 (i) Any and all firearms and ammunition shall be locked up at all times and kept in places inaccessible to children. No firearms possessed in violation of a State or federal law or a local government ordinance shall be present in the home at any time. Loaded guns shall not be kept in a foster home unless required by law enforcement officers and in accordance with their law enforcement agency's safety procedures.



FOSTER PARENT SPOTLIGHT



As a new addition to the newsletter, we will be spotlighting foster parents that have gone above and beyond in recent weeks. Please know that it could be you at any given moment!

The first parents that we are spotlighting are Don and Pat Pride. Recently, they have helped and saved a caseworker and supervisor extra hours of time. They have been with the agency for many years. Don and Pat open their home to all ages of children including teens. The Prides go above and beyond by taking the children in their home to all doctor and other appointments, supervising family visits, and picking children up for the workers in an emergency even in the middle of night. Don and Pat go the extra mile by always being available in the time of need. Some experiences include going to police stations to pick up runaways at all hours of the night and taking them home until the morning. They have been patient and have a great respect and working relationship with the child welfare team. The Prides are active in support group and advocate for their foster children as well as other foster parents and biological parents. Don and Pat both love children and they want to do what is best for them. We appreciate all that they do and are very glad that they are part of our team. Thank you Don and Pat!

We want to thank all of our foster parents because they are the best. Thanks to you for all that you do!

UPCOMING FOSTER PARENT TRAININGS

Educational Advocacy (6 credit hours)

East Alton

Saturday 5/31/14, 9:30 - 12:30 & 1:30 - 4:30

Call 1-877-800-3393 to register

Adoption Certification (9 credit hours)

Maryville

Saturday, 5/10/14, 9:00 – 12:00 & 1:00 – 4:00

and Saturday, 5/17/14, 9:00 – 12:00

Contact your Case Manager or Licensing Specialist to register or contact the Registration Unit at 1-877-800-3393 to register for the on-line training.

Specialized Foster Parent Training

If you are interested in the Specialized Training in order to take placement of children with special needs (behavior and medical), please contact Mary Savage at (618) 258-8778.

Belleville Foster Parent

Support Group & Training

Every 3rd Tuesday of the month, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Babysitting is provided for this training

Please contact Mary Savage at 618-258-8778 or

Mary.Savage@caritasfamily.org to RSVP

East Alton Foster Parent

Support Group & Training

Every 2nd Thursday of the month, 6:00 – 9:00

p.m.; Babysitting is provided for this training

Please contact Mary Savage at 618-258-8778 or

Mary.Savage@caritasfamily.org to RSVP

CPR

If you have a valid CPR certification through the American Red Cross that is about to expire, you may contact Tina Bilzing at 618-394-5900, x 282 to “Challenge” and renew your certificate for another 2 years. (All Foster Parents that are Specialized homes or have water hazards must be CPR certified.)

Additional training hours may be obtained through the 4th Edition of the Lending Library Catalog. This catalog can be viewed at www.state.il.us/dcfs/index/shtml under “Training”, You may also contact your licensing work to inquire about ‘Digital Training’ options.



CARITAS

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Foster Parent NEWS

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Proud member of



United Way
of Greater St. Louis

WALK/RUN FOR FOSTER KIDS!

Caritas will be hosting our first Inaugural 1 Mile Family Walk and 5K Run on Saturday May 17, 2014. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Parking Lot A. Following registration, there will be a short Zumba Warm-Up at 9:30 a.m. and the Walk/Run will start at 9:45 a.m. There will be fun for the whole family including face painting, live music, free popcorn and sno-cones. Don't miss the appearances by Gateway Grizzlies' Izzy the Grizzly and St. Louis Cardinals' Fred Bird! Gather a team to raise money and win prizes! Registration and pledge forms are available at www.caritasfamilysolutions.org. This Walk/Run will benefit all of Caritas Family Solutions' programs including Adoption, Pregnancy Care, Foster Care, Counseling, and Senior Assistance. For more information or if you would like to volunteer contact Ashlee Ritchie at 618-688-1162 or Ashlee.Ritchie@caritasfamily.org. Come join us!

