

FAMILY NEWSLETTER

LOOKING FOR CHEAP AND EASY WAYS TO GET OUTSIDE THIS WINTER?

See if you can cross everything off this winter bucket list before the snow melts for spring!

- Build a snowperson
- Go sledding
- Have a snowball fight
- Have a scavenger hunt for “frozen gems” (mix food coloring and water and freeze in an ice cube tray)
- Catch a snowflake on your tongue
- Make a snow angel
- Play “follow the leader” in each other’s footprints in the snow
- Shovel a neighbor’s driveway
- Paint the snow (Mix food coloring and water and put it in a spray bottle or use brushes and bowls)
- Play tag in the snow
- Play iSpy with a list of things you come up with together
- Build a snow fort
- Make snow cones with fresh snow and your favorite juice or soda

THE IMPORTANCE OF FINDING & BUILDING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Since becoming a Foster Care Navigator in October 2018, Monica Day has had the opportunity to work with many families. During her times as a Navigator, she has found that people often get involved in foster care and adoption because it is a value they hold in their family. She often hears reasons such as “my mom was adopted,” or “my aunt adopted me and 9 of my cousins, so it’s something I’ve always wanted to do.”

But what do you do when faced with the opportunity to foster, if like Monica, your thoughts are more like “What is my family going to think of this? Are they going to be supportive?” You may wonder if you can be successful if you don’t have the full support of extended family and friends.

If you are faced with this type of dilemma, there are a few things you can do:

Talk with your family about foster care and share why it is important to you. Your loved ones have probably long imagined how a future family would look. Maybe for them, foster care and adoption are unfamiliar, or perhaps they have friends or family who have struggled with foster care or adoption.

If they express concerns, let them know you hear them. While fostering and adoption are a more complicated path to parenthood, working through those concerns can bring you closer together. Many people find great meaning in working diligently for things, and it can create tremendous satisfaction to parent kids from hard places and know you have helped a child and family in their time of need.

Be honest about your resources and your willingness to ask for help when things get tough.

What does support look like to you? Perhaps members of your family want to be supportive but don’t know how.

Learn together.

Feeling responsible for educating your loved ones on what to expect or how to be supportive can be overwhelming. So, invite friends and family to watch and discuss shows and films together that feature foster and adoptive families or participate in foster and adoptive parent trainings. Take advantage of trainings and conferences by using them as an opportunity for your family to hear from someone who isn’t you. Sharing that responsibility with our trainers and speakers may relieve some of the pressure.

While speaking with Monica, she reflected on the learning curve she had after her great nephews were placed with her. Unprepared and lacking quality support groups, the first few years were more difficult than they needed to be. Without resources centered on raising children with special needs, too much stress was put on some of her friendships and family relationships. “I did have support, but there were times when we didn’t. It hurt when we didn’t celebrate the arrival of our second foster child (who was an infant) with a baby shower and when only two relatives came to our son’s adoption ceremony.” It can be lonely to embark on such an important journey without the full enthusiasm of the people in your life.

When things got to be too much, Monica reached out to her community for help. In one summer, she found support at her church, from the [Post Adoption Resource Center \(PARC\)](#), and within the huge community of foster and adoptive families she met through her new career with the [Adoptive and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention \(AFPRR\) Team](#) as a Foster Care Navigator.

She shares, “I was afraid to ask for help because, ‘What if others intervened in ways that hurt rather than helped?’ But I had run out of ideas, took a risk, and offered a spoken concern during the weekly ‘joys and sorrows’ during church. After the service, several members approached me. They said ‘Oh! You should talk with ‘so and so’ and hear what she went through while raising her children,’ and ‘I understand. My adoptive kids had some really challenging moments growing up too, and ‘Good for you for bringing up your struggles as a parent. It can be really hard to be honest about how we feel we are falling short. You’re an excellent mom.’” Monica explained the value of sharing about her struggles and how the experience encouraged her to reach out again and led her to find a family support worker through PARC.

Too often, when the going gets tough, parents may feel lost and hopeless. Sometimes foster parents might even consider requesting to have the children removed from their home. Monica’s worker saw that she was weathering the bumpy road with great commitment and willingness to learn and grow for her children. After walking through a survey on parenting style with Monica, her worker was able to reassure her that she was doing everything right and even encouraged her to teach other foster and adoptive parents!

This feedback shocked and relieved Monica. She was suffering from secondary trauma and didn’t know it. She had blamed herself for not being able to help her kids with their aggressive behaviors. Learning it wasn’t her fault freed Monica to embark confidently in the ongoing work to help heal the insecure attachments, grieve the losses, and integrate transracial adoption issues that are so common to foster and adoptive families.

Shortly after her positive exchange with PARC, Monica connected with the AFPRR Team at a local recruitment event. Upon hearing her story, the recruiter encouraged her to apply for the Foster Care Navigator position in her county. Monica noted, “Once I was hired, I was able to dedicate myself to understanding our family dynamics because I was exposed to so many wonderful resources at work.”



Celebrating “Simple” Victories



“We achieved a milestone this past summer that, two years ago, I wouldn’t have believed was possible for our family. We went on a several-day overnight road trip up north with two other adoptive families. With careful planning with the other moms, Holly and Jordan, we and our kids strengthened our friendships and provided a meaningful social experience for our families.”

– Monica Day



Here are some things that she says helped the most:

Gaining insight into the impacts of secondary trauma and what to do about it

Information on “The Invisible Suitcase” can be found in the PRIDE Book on pg. 219.

Developing friendships with other foster/adoptive moms through PRIDE classes and local support groups

Seeing other moms face similar serious behaviors with their kids helped Monica combat feelings of isolation and break the cycle of blaming herself for the behaviors her kids displayed at home.

Having coworkers and supervisors who understand her situation

Because of the nature of Monica’s work, she is surrounded by colleagues who “have similarly struggled and can relate to complicated losses, burnout, and stubborn commitment to kids and their healing,” as well as provide the support and accommodation she needs to be successful professionally.

Monica shares, “There is real comfort in knowing I am not alone in my struggle. My kids benefit because I can be calm in my efforts with them, knowing that their being okay isn’t entirely up to what I do. Less pressure means I’m more flexible. Progress is sometimes harder to notice than I’d like, but time and time again, I find myself a proud mama—proud of them for being spectacular in their unique ways and proud of myself for finding a way through.”

UPCOMING EVENTS, TRAININGS, & SUPPORT GROUPS

- ❑ All **PRIDE trainings** are currently being held online. Families should be referred by their licensing workers for PRIDE. Training dates by region can be found on our website at: <https://www.fcnp.org/pridegrow-training-schedules>
- ❑ **Annie Lange Conference:** This FREE two-day virtual conference will take place on March 5th from 6-9 p.m. and March 6th from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. Questions? Contact Zsofi at 734-528-2047. Ready to register? Visit <https://nurtured-heart-conference.eventbrite.com>
- ❑ **Orientation dates** for local agencies can be found by county on our website at: <https://www.fcnp.org/become-foster-parent/inquiry-and-orientation>
- ❑ **Local Support Groups** can be found by county on our website at: <https://www.fcnp.org/support-group/>

DO YOU KNOW YOUR ‘ROUTE OF SAFETY’?

The 5 Love Languages is familiar to many of us, but have you heard of Routes of Safety?

This model, created by Jake Ernst, MSW, RSW, explores the importance of feeling safe in our relationships – especially those of us who have experienced trauma or other painful experiences – and provides us with a framework to better understand what we need to actually achieve it.

For more info about on the eight routes of safety (inner guidance, sensory experiences, private retreat, quality relationships, closeness and proximity, common humanity, protective measures, and structure and certainty), click [HERE!](#)

MICHIGAN RESOURCE GUIDE

Did you know, we’ve developed a digital guide with county-specific resources for foster, adoptive, and kinship families? Access it at <https://www.MichiganResourceGuide.org/>.

FOSTER CARE NAVIGATOR PROGRAM WEBSITE

Our website has had a makeover as well! Check out our new look at <https://FCNP.org>.

Get to know Monica and the other Foster Care Navigators better on our Meet the Staff page [HERE!](#)



We Are Parents

Foster Care Navigator Program

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WHAT IS A FOSTER CARE NAVIGATOR?

A Foster Care Navigator is someone who serves as a liaison between current and prospective foster parents and their agency. As trained and experienced foster parents themselves, each Navigator will mentor, through their own experience, parents navigating through the world of foster care.

The Adoptive and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention (AFPRR) program in Region 4 is a program of Judson Center and is funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about becoming a foster parent, visit us at www.fcnp.org or call 855-MICH-KIDS.



Foster Care
Navigator Program



@FCNavigators



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