



In This Issue ...

- ▶ **New FPC Autism Course Sheds Light on Autism Spectrum Disorders**
- ▶ **Everyday Heroes**
 - *Mickey and Salvatore D'Ambrosia*
- ▶ **Sick Child Check**
- ▶ **Care-Free Cooking**
 - *Simple and Quick Taco Soup*
- ▶ **Kids Korner**
 - *October Word Find*
 - *Creative Youth*
 - *Kids Crafts: Autumn Leaves Placemat*

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FPC Reader's Question

The Connections staff wants to hear from you. What do you like about this monthly newsletter? What would you like to see more of? Are the articles helpful? Please email us at lisa@northwestmedia.com with your ideas. Thank you.

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New FPC Autism Course Sheds Light on Autism Spectrum Disorders

In the newest Foster Parent College course, "Children With Autism," Dr. Robert Nickel joins a panel of foster, adoptive, and kinship providers to explore this timely topic. Dr. Nickel is a developmental and behavioral pediatrician, author, and specialist in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). He calls on his 30 years of experience to discuss the characteristic behaviors of children with ASDs, general recommendations for treatment, medical problems common to children with ASDs, and behavior management strategies for parents and caregivers.

The class begins by spelling out typical behaviors of children with ASDs. They include impaired communication, social skills and play; may show little or no interest in others; and may play with toys in odd or repetitive ways. The panel members discuss their experiences with the children in their care, and Dr. Nickel helps them to understand their youngsters so that they can better help them. He also points out a plan of action for caregivers who believe they are caring for a child with an ASD.

Next, the caregivers are invited to share their stories and the challenges they face with the children in their care. In answering their questions, Dr. Nickel talks about Early Intervention programs, Functional Behavior Assessment, Applied Behavior Analysis, "sensory diets," and specific hands-on strategies for helping children overcome their communication and social challenges, like floor-time and picture schedules.

Then, Dr. Nickel answers questions about common health problems, medication, diet and nutrition, theories and risks of alternative and complementary therapies, and advice on getting more information before embarking on any new treatments.

In closing, Dr. Nickel thanks the parents for taking on the difficult task of fostering or adopting a child with an

ASD. Their work is important and their efforts have a huge impact on the lives of their children. He also encourages parents to take care of themselves, and recommends joining a support group for parents of children with ASD.

The class includes supplemental materials with more detailed information, as well as a list of helpful organizations and websites.

To watch a free, brief preview of the class, visit FosterParentCollege.com.

Our sister site, SocialLearning.com, sells three pages of books and DVDs about autism spectrum disorders. Of special interest to parents are:

- ▶ *"Does My Child Have Autism?: A Parent's Guide to Early Detection and Intervention in Autism Spectrum Disorders."* This book helps parents of infants and toddlers detect ASDs and get appropriate help.
- ▶ *"Getting the Best for Your Child With Autism: An Expert's Guide to Treatment."* This book helps parents assess their child's strengths and weaknesses and then guides them step-by-step in developing an action plan custom-tailored to their child.
- ▶ *"The Only Boy in the World: A Father Explores the Mysteries in Autism."* The fascinating memoir of a journalist and single dad who raised his autistic son, and all the strange and amazing experiences they had together and what we can learn from his son's challenges; especially recommended for parents of older children.
- ▶ *"A Mind Apart: Understanding Children with Autism and Asperger Syndrome."* This book provides a rare glimpse into the minds of children with these disorders, with advice on how to work with their unique styles.

Everyday Heroes – Mickey and Salvatore D’Ambrosia

Mickey and Salvatore D’Ambrosia really, really love children. For over 40 years, more than 500 kids have called their Gardner, CO house home, most as foster children. Two things every single one of those children got, no matter how they came into the D’Ambrosia home or how long they stayed, were unconditional love and a tenacious advocate.

“When you get a child, you have to look at that child and say, ‘this child is mine!’ and you have to be everything for that child, as though it were your own, no matter what,” says Mickey.

Mickey and Salvatore started out as informal foster parents, taking in community teens and children whose families were struggling. In the mid-1980s, the D’Ambrosias were approached by the Huerfano County Department of Social Services and asked to become a certified foster home, which they did. Since becoming certified, they have fostered over 300 kids. Currently, there are five children in the home; a teen they adopted as an infant, a teen foreign exchange student, a 7-year-old they are adopting, a toddler, and a 9-year-old who spends half the week with them. Becca Castle, the agency’s Foster Care Coordinator, writes that “Mickey and Sal are not just heroes, they are the cornerstone of what fostering is all about.”

But Mickey doesn’t see herself as a hero, she sees herself as a mom, plain and simple. She changes diapers, she preserves food for the harsh mountain winters that occasionally leave them housebound, she wipes tears, and she talks and listens. Sometimes, what she hears is heartbreaking, like the cries of children who have witnessed extreme violence or experienced abuse. But she responds with love and guidance and support, for the children and the parents, and tries to make a difference for the whole family.

“It’s rewarding knowing that you’ve made a difference in the child’s life and knowing when they go back to their parents that you’ve made a difference in the family’s life. We do a lot of counseling with the birth parents, and we have an open door policy, so that they can always call us in a pinch or when they need help dealing with their kids. A lot of times they’ll call and ask how we dealt with something with their kids,” she says.

That open door policy is why they have kept in touch with so many of the youngsters who have been in their care. For a lot of the kids, Mickey and Sal are their only family. And sometimes, things come full circle; a youngster in their care now is the child of one of their former foster children. The little one is in the process of being adopted, and the adoptive parents have signed Mickey and Sal on as grandparents.

Fostering has become a family tradition for the D’Ambrosias. Of their five birth children, all have fostered informally and one has adopted.

“When you get a child, you have to look at that child and say, ‘this child is mine!’ and you have to be everything for that child, as though it were your own, no matter what”

“Kids are where it’s at. They’re the ones who are going to take care of us when we’re older, and whatever we can do to help them is going to affect how they do that; it’s going to have a global effect . . . I just wish the whole world could see the impact fostering has on these kids.”

We applaud the efforts of Mickey and Salvatore D’Ambrosia for their commitment to improving the lives of young people; they serve as a shining example of hard-working foster and adoptive parents everywhere. In recognition of their efforts, Mickey and Sal will receive an “Everyday Heroes” certificate of excellence and will be awarded one free course of their choosing from [FOSTERPARENTCOLLEGE.COM](http://WWW.FOSTERPARENTCOLLEGE.COM).



Sick Child Check

Should I Send My Child To School?

We've all had those mornings when we just aren't sure if our child is healthy enough for school. Here's the advice offered in a brochure published by the Multnomah County (OR) Medical Auxilliary.

Keep a child home if he has:

- ▶ A stomach ache lasts longer than 4 hours or is severe enough to limit activity*
- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Had diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- ▶ Severe tooth or ear pain*
- ▶ A severe headache that follows a fall or blow to the head*
- ▶ Joint pain that causes limping or other restricted activity*
- ▶ A fever over 100 degrees
- ▶ Had a fever within the past 24 hours
- ▶ A rash or spots covering a large area*
- ▶ A rash*
- ▶ A heavy cold and hacking cough
- ▶ A sore throat with white spots in the back of the throat*
- ▶ A sore throat with redness in the back of the throat or swollen glands*
- ▶ Sore throat with fever*
- ▶ Lice
- ▶ Ringworm*
- ▶ Pink-eye*



*Call a doctor in these instances!

Care-Free Cooking – Simple and Quick Taco Soup

This quick soup can be on the table in 30 minutes. This is a good basic recipe that can be altered by adjusting seasonings, adding or subtracting vegetables, or adding cooked pasta or rice. The possibilities are endless, so be creative. If you need more liquid, add broth or water.

Ingredients:

- ▶ 1 lb. ground beef
- ▶ 1 small onion, chopped fine
- ▶ 1 clove garlic, minced
- ▶ 1 can chopped tomatoes
- ▶ 1 can pinto beans
- ▶ 1 can kidney beans
- ▶ 2 cups frozen corn
- ▶ 1 package taco seasoning
- ▶ Salt and pepper

In a preheated medium-sized skillet, cook the ground beef, onion and garlic until the beef is no longer pink. Stir in the taco seasoning.

Put the beef mixture into a soup pot, and add all the other ingredients. Bring to a simmer over medium-high, then hold at a slow simmer for about 20 minutes.

Serve with cheese quesadillas or cornbread.



October Word Find – Hang this page on your fridge for your children’s enjoyment.

For extra fun, look up words you don’t know in a dictionary or on Wikipedia.com.

Word Key:

Pumpkin, Leaves, Frost, Fog, Bonfire, Apples, Hayride, Chilly, Squirrels, Scarecrow, Acorn, Harvest, Migration, Rake, Cider, Football, Soccer, Cider, Cinnamon, Gourd

I	D	B	C	E	G	E	F	L	H	Z	I	T	N	Z	C	S	Y
P	R	O	Y	Q	M	U	W	E	A	D	S	S	O	O	H	L	K
U	U	N	T	M	I	H	H	A	Y	Z	C	O	M	G	I	E	F
M	O	F	Y	V	G	A	S	V	R	R	A	R	A	T	L	R	O
P	G	I	G	N	R	O	S	E	I	A	R	F	N	S	L	R	O
K	D	R	R	V	A	I	O	S	D	C	E	X	N	E	Y	I	T
I	O	E	E	F	T	X	C	F	E	O	C	Z	I	L	R	U	B
N	U	S	D	B	I	C	C	G	Z	R	R	I	C	P	M	Q	A
A	T	E	I	R	O	U	E	W	O	N	O	M	O	P	C	S	L
H	W	X	C	O	N	E	R	Q	P	F	W	F	R	A	K	E	L

Kids Krafts

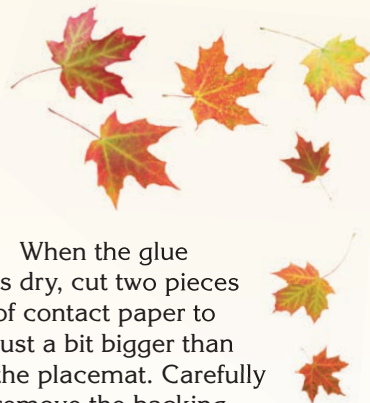
Sitting at the table with your own personal Autumn Leaves Placemat makes it fun to sit still and eat your vegetables!

Autumn Leaves Placemat

- ▶ A large sheet of construction paper in black, brown or green
- ▶ Clear contact paper
- ▶ Leaves
- ▶ Ordinary craft glue
- ▶ Newspaper your family has finished reading

Collect leaves from outside. Spread them out between sheets of newspaper and put some heavy books on top to flatten them. Let them sit a couple of hours or so to get flat.

Later on, or the next day, cut the construction paper to the size you want for your placemat. Glue the leaves on. Let the glue dry for as long as the glue bottle label says.



When the glue is dry, cut two pieces of contact paper to just a bit bigger than the placemat. Carefully remove the backing from one sheet of contact paper and gently set the leafy placemat on it, then do the same with the second sheet of contact paper. Squeeze the edges of the contact paper to “seal” them so your placemat can be wiped without damaging the contact paper and leaves inside.

Happy dining! And remember, when you pretend broccoli stalks are trees and pretend you are a dinosaur, it’s really fun to eat broccoli!

Creative Youth

Love

Love is a weakness
 Love is a strength
 It depends on how you use it
 Some use it to help others
 Some use it to hurt others
 Some just don't know what it is.
 It's my job to stop the hurters
 It's my job to help the helpers
 Some people want the help
 Some people need the help
 There is a difference between
 Wanting the help and needing the help
 It's my job to be there
 It's your job to be there
 It's our job to be there
 When they need us.

by Summer, Oklahoma