

Strong Communities Equal Strong Parents

Listening is a big part of what we do at Foster Parent College. We listen to the feedback we get from agency staff and caregivers, we read blogs and forums, and we keep our ears perked at meetings and conferences. We hear two recurring themes: 1.) caregivers who feel informed and supported are better at coping with challenges, and 2.) retention of quality resource parents is a priority for agencies.

Happily, with just a little effort, the two intersect. By providing resource parents with both information and a sense of community, you can ensure they are able to deal with the challenges they face. That, in turn, keeps them active and involved.

Addressing the first issue requires providing your care givers information in a timely fashion. If a foster parent in your agency has never cared for a child who sets fires or is highly sexualized, but is about to, you can provide training specific to that behavior before the child arrives. If time is a factor, online training is quick; learning how to cope can happen in as little as 40 minutes.

“Listening is a big part of what we do at Foster Parent College. We listen to the feedback we get from agency staff and caregivers, we read blogs and forums, and we keep our ears perked at meetings and conferences.”

When a problem arises and caregivers reach out for guidance, again, help is only a mouse-click away. Foster Parent College is always there, especially for those late-night calls.

Beyond education, you can help your parents succeed by building a community for them. A foster mom told us her agency hosts regular play times and coffee klatches so the foster parents can meet and mingle, share, and get new ideas and support. Those events, and the friends she has made through them, are essential to her on many levels. The foster mom featured in this month's Everyday Heroes column in Connections is building community by mentoring new foster parents, and helping them settle into their new roles. She herself gets support and community by being active in her local foster care organization.

These women, along with agency staff, are getting the support they require and developing the community they need to feel great about what they do, all at very little cost to their agencies.

What's Happening

Learn how to get the most from your Foster Parent College account by attending a free Webinar. For February dates and times, call Anna at 800-777-6636 ext. 118.

FPC recently launced its 24th online course, *Child Abuse and Neglect*. The course was developed as a pre-service course in conjunction with the Institute for Health Services in Ohio, and is suitable for pre-service and in-service training. For more information and a brief preview of *Child Abuse and Neglect*, visit FosterParentCollege.com.

We invite agencies to submit news for this column. This is your space to announce new programs, agency successes, conferences, events and trainings that are of interest to *Solutions* readers.

Please email your brief announcement to lisa@northwestmedia.com by the 15th of the month for the following month's edition.

Time to Nominate Everyday Heroes

In early 2008 we launched a new column called *Everyday Heroes* in our *Connections* newsletter. The column puts the spotlight on hardworking foster, adoptive and kinship parents who deserve a little recognition.

We invite our *Solutions* readers to nominate heroes in their communities. Please email your nominations to lisa@northwestmedia.com and include the caregivers' names, phone numbers and email addresses as well as your name and agency. A sentence or two explaining why you are nominating the caregivers is helpful. Thank you.

Substance Exposed Newborns

FosterParentCollege has received a federal grant to develop a course on parenting substance exposed newborns and would like to interview foster parents experienced in the care of such newborns. Send the names and phone numbers of recommended foster parents to lisa@northwestmedia.com. Thank you.