

YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU

Foster Parent Quarterly

Oct. 2017

This quarter's featured article is from the only monthly magazine devoted to Foster Care called Foster Focus. Bullying was a hot topic in 2014. Cyber bullying was profiled after several teenagers took their lives because they felt they could no longer handle the stress of being harassed by classmates. Many school districts are looking at ways to handle bullying which has become a significant problem in schools.

Foster Parents of the Quarter:

Kathleen and Tony DiLuciano have been licensed with the Youth Service Bureau since June of 2012. They have fostered two children, mentored others, and adopted two children. The DiLuciano's have been actively involved in fundraising for the agency, and Kathleen has been a member of our Foundation Board. They have donated countless hours supporting the agency and foster children and their birth families.

Throughout their fostering of the two boys they have adopted, they have maintained the relationship with the grandparents and uncle of the boys. After adoption occurred, the family continues to encourage the relationship and frequent visits so that their children always know their entire family.

The DiLuciano's have donated many toys, clothes, and money to the agency on an ongoing basis. Kathleen has done two groups with our homeless youth, both boys and girls. They work on self-image, skin care, and job interviewing.

Foster Care Recruitment

Youth Service Bureau of Illinois Valley is always looking to recruit new foster parents to care for children who have been abused or neglected by their biological families. Foster parents are role models, teachers, friends and support to the children.

YSB offers the following free informational open house's each month for interested families:

Aurora, IL

2nd Tuesday of Every Month 5:30 to 6:30 PM
1700 N. Farnsworth Ave., Suite 18
Aurora, IL 60505
Contact 630-820-6303 ext. 114

Rockford, IL

3rd Tuesday of Every Month 5:30 to 6:30 PM
308 W. State St., Suite 475
Rockford, IL 61101
Contact 815-316-1969



Like us on Facebook or visit our agency website at www.ysbiv.org.

If you would like to join our Foster Parent Facebook page please contact Kelley Lumpkin for an invite. She can be reached at kelleyl@ysbiv.org



Bullying: The Hidden Harrassment of Foster Children

Richard Villasana

Bullying was a hot topic in 2014. Cyber bullying was profiled after several teenagers took their lives because they felt they could no longer handle the stress of being harassed by classmates. Many school districts are looking at ways to handle bullying which has become a significant problem in schools. What is probably not well known is the level of bullying that is endured by foster children, who their tormentors are and the effect on these kids.

A recent survey asked former foster children if they had been harassed in school. Some of the responses were:

- “I was. A lot of the boys physically hurt me, and girls would be really mean.”
- “Yes, I was bullied by one girl in high school who was my friend. When I told her I was in foster care, everything changed. She would say things like ‘at least my parents love me’ and ‘at least I have a family.’ I had heaps of kids in primary school do the same. Their favorite line was ‘at least my parents love me.’”
- “When girls in middle school found out, they were brutal. Needless to say it made life a lot harder.”
- “I was treated differently by teachers and bullied by the popular girls in town. I would skip school just to not have to put up with it every day.”
- “I remember once birthday invitations were handed out to every girl in class but me. ‘Her foster mother won’t let her go to anyone’s house anyway,’ the girl announced to the class.”

These responses are typical. Classmates are a huge challenge for many foster kids be-

cause fellow students can be verbally and physically abusive. Other comments told about the parents of fellow students making derogatory remarks or going out of their way to remind the foster child that they were different or delinquent. Some foster children wrote about having to fight back and getting into trouble for defending themselves while a few wrote how they started to become a bully themselves. Others talked about having run away and living on the street or overdosing on pills and ending up in ICU, all to get away from the physical and emotional pain they experienced at school.

Educators: Instigators of Harassment - Teachers can be responsible for letting classmates know that a child is in foster care.

They may learn about a foster child because when that child is enrolled, the school will receive required legal documents for identification. A birth certificate can easily signal that a child is not related to the parents. One school administrator said that common sense should dictate that talking about a student’s personal life is improper unless there is a medical emergency. Yet sometimes a teacher will tell a foster kid’s classmates about them. Then the bullying begins.

I recently sat down with a high school teacher, “Leslie,” who had 17 years of experience. I told her how many foster teens are afraid of being found out at school. Leslie replied, “Most kids are too self-absorbed to care if a fellow student is a foster teen.” As the quotes from former foster children show, her observations couldn’t be further from the truth. I relayed her comments to several former foster kids who shared that hers was not an uncommon attitude to several former foster kids who shared that hers was not an un-



common attitude. Therein lies a serious part of the problem for foster children. When educated, experienced teachers

are so out of touch with the lives of their students, these kids will eventually lose trust in another important authority figure.

We have all heard at least one story of an athlete or successful business person who connected their success with having had a coach or teacher during their childhood, someone who cared enough to work with and support them. But foster children are often deprived of this opportunity by the ignorance of their teachers. The sad fact is that 19% of children enter foster care because they were physically or sexually abused by a parent, the ultimate authority figure. Almost one-third of foster kids are physically or sexually abused while in foster care. Now these kids are in school where another authority figure, their teacher, has turned against them by embarrassing them to their classmates and putting the foster kid potentially in harm's way. Another factor is that most foster kids are already traumatized by how they were removed from their home.

Teachers, administrators and foster parents may be harming a child either directly or through indifference. Somehow the public in general expects these kids to look past all of that hurt and abuse and trust adults who have already shown they are clearly not to be trusted. Some foster children do find refuge with a teacher. Jenny wrote, "I was bullied

several times. That's why I kept close to the teachers." Yet even if a foster child finds a protective and sympathetic teacher, the child will have to spend some time alone with other students. Former foster kids have reported being attacked in restrooms and out on the playground. School administrators sometimes instigate abuse and harassment. Alec, a former foster youth, shared this story: "My senior year, I was transferred to a foster home in Wisconsin. My foster mother took my foster brother and me to the school about a week before school started to meet with the principal. He sat us down and gave us a lecture on how he knew we were foster kids and would be watching us. If we caused problems he would have our asses. We were both in [foster care] because of abusive parents."

Cathy Clark, a former foster youth who worked for her school district, shared that when teachers didn't want to deal with a foster care kid, the principal would be summoned and would take the student to their office even when the child had done nothing disruptive in class. Many schools have established policies against harassment. The San Diego Unified School District's policy states, "San Diego Unified has adopted a policy that prohibits discrimination, harassment, intimidation and bullying based on actual or perceived ancestry, age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or association with a person or a group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics."

Volume 4 Issue 8



Fire Safety

Remember that October is Fire Prevention week. Please, remember to practice those fire escape plans with the children. DCFS License Standards requires that you practice 4x a year. Check those detectors monthly to make sure they will sound off loud enough to wake your household, if needed. Know if your detectors are old and past their expiration dates. Most detectors are good for 8 to 10 years, maximum. Check with your local fire department for any additional instructions to keep you and your family safe.

We are entering the holiday seasons with many candles being lit and holiday décor about. Please be safe about the proximity of decorations to open fires/flames. Depending on the holiday there may be fire pits, fireplaces and/or candles being lit. Some holidays even have strings of lights strewn about (check their wires for any breaks that could be a fire hazard).

The local fire department is also your best bet for CPR training for a really low cost or for free. The fire fighters, EMTs and paramedics need to re-up that training regularly and tend to allow people from the public to join in. By the standards of the National Council of Accreditation, all foster parents need to be CPR trained. The foster parents with water hazards (hot tubs, pools, fountains, ponds, etc.) on or near their property need to be CPR certified. Additionally, foster parents who are working with special needs children need to be CPR certified. These hours will count towards your continuing education hours for renewal of your license.

Other Safety Needs

With the colder weather coming, you and your households will probably be indoors more often. Many of your activities may be an increase on the electronic devices. Get yourself educated on dangers out there, of which many are susceptible. The foster children due to their early life traumas are many times especially susceptible despite their “street smarts”. This newsletter has some websites with trainings, information, etc. Please make use of it. Obtain training hours and learn to protect the children and yourselves.

One suggestion would be the very real danger of human trafficking. This is not just an urban issue. DCFSTraining.org (in the sidebar listing a few of the online resources) has a class for that. Click on the picture below the title “On-Demand Trainings”. Go into the caregiver listing. Scroll down the list of class titles to PRIDE Supplemental – Human Trafficking. There is another one that is on social media usage (both you and the child using the social media sites).

Things to Remember:

Foster parents need to schedule the annual Well Child Medical exams for their foster children, a sports physical appointment or other appointments do not count! They can have the form filled out for the sports physical or other required form at the same time but it needs to be the full well child exam. Tell your provider to bill it as a full well child exam. DCFS is focusing heavily on this and want all children to be in compliance

If you have any questions, please direct them to your Case Worker. Thank You!

Online Training Sites:

www.fosterparentcollege.com

www.attach.org

www.fosterparentstest.com

<http://www.autismillinois.org/resources/>

<http://dsc.uic.edu/>

NFCM@childwelfare.gov

www.CDC.gov/learning

<https://www.dcfstraining.org>

Recruiting:

If you know of someone who might want to be a foster parent, please call Kelley at 630-820-6303 ext 114.