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January/February Newsletter 2016



Director's Letter

Happy New Year!

Dear Families,

As 2015 draws to a close and we enter into 2016, I am reflective on this past year as well as looking forward to the continued mission of Focus on Youth in 2016. This year was a time of transition, as we said goodbye to Focus' Founder and Executive Director, Cindy Skinner who retired on June 5 after 23 years, leaving behind a rich legacy of uncompromising excellence in service to children and families. In the midst of these changes, our mission to improve the permanency, safety, and well-being of youth and our foundation as a Christian faith-based agency remain the hallmarks that define who we are. Focus will continue to be an agency committed to placing the needs of children at the forefront of its mission, as it has for the past 23 years.

As I reflect on this past year, I want you to know how thankful I am that you are a part of our mission. Specifically, I am thankful:

- For the sacrifices you make individually and as a family. Sacrifices of time, relationship, privacy, autonomy, convenience, control, and comfort. On behalf of the children who wouldn't have had anywhere else to go if it wasn't for your sacrifices, thank you!
- For those of you who said goodbye to children you love and care deeply for as they reunified with their birth families or went to other placements. I thank you, because this is often the hardest part of being a foster parent...loving and caring for children so deeply while they are with you, and then saying goodbye. Thank you for your willingness to give of yourself in this way. Thank you for your willingness to reach out and develop relationships with birth families.
- For the many families who have adopted this year. Thank you for being a forever family for your children.
- For your willingness to stretch outside your comfort zones. Taking children in your home in the middle of the night and in the middle of the holidays; taking in more children than you originally planned for so siblings can stay together; taking in older children than you originally thought you would.

- For our respite providers! Your service to other families by providing respite care to the children is so needed and so appreciated!
- For your willingness to keep looking therapeutically at the needs of the children in your care. For your willingness to look at their behavior through the lens of trauma and engage in a way that helps the children heal. Thank you!

We are here to help children and their families. We are here because God cares deeply for vulnerable children. We are here because we are needed. We are here because you have partnered with us in this work.

May God bless you and your family -

Bryan Forney
Executive Director

Announcements

New Electronic Record System

Focus on Youth is implementing a new electronic record system. Youth specialists and therapists will be utilizing this system for Individual Service Plans beginning in January. Please be patient with us as we get used to this new system, as ISP meetings may take a little bit longer in the beginning.

Focus on Youth wants you to recruit for us !!

Foster parents make the best recruiters. Please tell others about Focus on Youth. We will pay you for any family that you refer to become foster parents when that family attends all Pre-placement training; completes the licensing process and takes their first placement(s). For each family you refer that finishes the process and accepts a placement, you will receive a \$50 stipend. For each family you refer that accepts the placement of a sibling group of three or more or any child age 12 and older you will receive a \$200 stipend.



Our need is for families to work with teens and/or sibling groups. There is a huge need in Southwest Ohio for homes for teens and sibs. We believe our families know others who may want to help. That family at church that is always so supportive.....the neighbors who were willing to be approved for respite....you have resources for kids. Help us help the children.

Monday night Pre-placement classes are beginning January 23rd and go until March 5th, 2016.

All evening trainings are from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Remember, it is best for individuals to register over the phone for the Pre-Placement trainings.

Feel free to refer them to Christina Kappen.

Focus on Youth
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Clinical Article

Go Play Outside

Edwina Gilmore, MSW, LSW

As a play therapist I have discovered how important play is for children. Angela Hanscom in her book *Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident and Capable Children* writes about how children that are not allowed unrestricted free play outside with other children will not learn important social skills; like how to stand up for themselves, how to work through anger and frustration and most important empathy. Children need to learn these things through practice, especially outdoors where they can roam, explore and play away from the adult world.

Most children today spend most of their time indoors under the direct supervision of adults. A child's every waking hour is dictated both in school and outside of school. Even play opportunities are often regulated and controlled by well-meaning adults. Hour-long school recess is now reduced to 20 minutes with strict rules. Children are told what they can and cannot play. Traditional games like tag and kickball are a thing of the past. Play dates are organized by adults to keep children entertained, safe, and happy. What once was common for kids in the neighborhood to independently walk down the street to play a game of football or hockey on a pond has become an all-consuming sports travel team where children are ranked and judged based on skill.

At school, teachers report more and more children having trouble regulating their emotions in school, struggling with a sense of entitlement and constantly seeking out adult reassurance with every difficulty they encounter. Children need to experience and learn how to get along with others, how to be confident when encountering new situations and how to develop strong character traits such as

generosity and kindness. These skills are learned in child-led play experiences. If children truly got hours of free play with friends every day both during and outside of school they would learn the essential skills of negotiation, trading, conflict-resolution, empathy, kindness, sharing, compassion, and so much more. We need to stop trying to control every hour for children. It time to let them play. This is how they learn to cope in the real world. Go outside in the backyard, or to the park and have fun.

-From Article by Valerie Strauss, The Washington Post, December 11, 2015

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/12/11/why-adults-have-to>

Training Institute

What's New?

Additional Webinars!

- Online you will find that core classes have been reduced to 2 hours. There will also be some 1 hour webinars offered during the day for those of you who would love to listen over lunch.

New Core Class

- Caregivers will begin to see a new “Core” class on your ITNAs called Safe Crisis Management for Caregivers. This is a new de-escalation training that will be offered starting in 2016 that will offered in place of the old Behavior Support & Management Course. .

Important Reminders

Outside Training Forms

- There has been an increasing number of foster parents attending outside trainings. Remember to contact, Alicia Ajiboye, Training Manager, if you have questions about attending trainings outside of our agency. In order for outside training credit to be accepted, please be sure that you turn in your certificates and complete the most updated outside training form. The updated version of the form can be found on our website in the "FOY Members" section. Please contact Andy at adodds@focusonyouth.com if you need assistance logging on.

Fees

- Fees listed on our training brochures and website are for those who want to attend FOY training outside of our agency. Foster parent trainings offered through FOY are **FREE** to current FOY foster parent and alternative care or respite providers.

Training Needs

- Did you know that some of the foster parent meeting topics and other webinars can help meet the needs of some of your training requirements? When caregivers are initially licensed, caregivers are required to take our core topics. After you re-certify, you no longer need to repeat those core classes. But instead you are encouraged to take other classes related to those four categories. FP meetings typically count towards helping caregivers meet your requirements. On our website there is a new section "Meets Required Topics (FOY Parents only):" that offers a key to what classes count for. FOY is committed to helping you meet all of your training needs. If you ever need help figuring out which trainings to take you can contact Training Manager, Alicia Ajiboye, at 513-644-1030.

[Click here to see upcoming trainings](#)



NHA Moments

Ariel- Good work on earning your Barbie! I am glad you got a toy you will really enjoy! Keep up the good work! - Megan

Brooklyn- You have done a great job at keeping up with your school work in addition to working as well! Keep up the good work!- Megan

Arianna- I've noticed how much effort you have been putting into school and learning new things! Great job and keep up the effort! - Amber

Marleny- You are a very sweet and kind person! I really enjoyed meeting you for the first time! I can't wait to continue to work with you! - Megan

Mike and Erin- Thank you for being so welcoming! I really enjoy working with you both! I hope you have a Happy Holiday and a great New Year!- Megan

Gwen- You are a very understanding and caring person. I really enjoy working with you!- Megan

Marleny- You have such a positive attitude and show such resiliency. Your inner strength shines through and you are going to be such a successful adult.- Patty

Randy and Erin- Your flexibility is appreciated and your problem solving skills show you have the best interest of children in mind. - Patty

Melingqua- I am so happy for your forever family to be completed! - Leah

Stephanie- I have noticed your calm attitude while in the office. You are respectful to all staff and your siblings. You have continuously impressed me with your ability to meet your goals. - Ms. Leah

Kissi- I have noticed you following directions so well from your foster parents. This shows me your strength and ability to meet goals. - Leah

Kalie and Dustin- You are doing a great job advocating and caring for the youth in your home. - Stephanie B.

Sencere-Way to go on improving your grades in school. Keep up the AWESOME work! - Stephanie B.

A Special Thank You to Our Volunteers

Kelly, Shawn, and
Kaitlyn W. – 2 hours
Frank J. – 2 hours



Congratulations to all
of the families who
adopted in 2015.



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