

**It's Time
To**

**SPEAK
OUT!**



One of the most disappointing and upsetting statements that I continually hear is from foster parents who are complaining about getting their required

training hours. Everyone who has completed the MAPP training should immediately recognize the diversity of situations that plague the abused and neglected children. Many foster parents place themselves on such a high pedestal for the wonderful accomplishments of their birth children they feel they need no additional training. However, you can't take a child placed in foster care and require the same disciplined routines as your birth children, especially when the placed child has come from a totally different environmental background. This is one reason why we must go beyond the bounds of conformity in our training to help these children achieve and succeed in a resistance society which still continues to use labels as markers for success.

Why do we become so emotionally combative and verbally defiant when we are asked to sacrifice a miniscule 12 hours per year to better a child's life? Be assured that children which are displaced due to sexual, mental and physical abuse, and those who have been abandoned and labeled hopeless (just because of their special needs) deserve more

LOVE, PATIENCE & TRAINING...NO, NOT ME!

applicable training than an average of one hour a month from those who say "I Care."

Every extra hour of training we receive is enabling us to understand the tragic lifestyles of our children and how we might make life a little better. School, Church and family home training are all great, and needed, but a foster care provider must have a full scale arsenal to be able to help fully accomplish lifestyle goals for that child. Why can't foster parents combine all of the love they give with a professional based tool of training? A child becoming a guest in a foster placement home is not at fault, but we can take advantage of this opportunity to guide and apply our professional based learning for an easier transition back home or elsewhere.

Foster parent training hours are not to fulfill your obligation to the State, but to fulfill your duty as a professional caregiver. It seems that all of us are constantly losing sight that foster care is only a temporary resource...do not let this time escape without offering these children positive reinforcement of what we have been taught to do. This will possibly be the only time in your child's life that you can apply your training to make that difference and impact their life.

Even as a temporary resource, falling in love with your child is the easiest thing in the world and letting go of that child or falling out of love with that child is an impossible task. Why do we use the term "foster children?" All of us should be accountable for the stigmatic tag we place on these children. When they enter our family it immediately becomes a blended family. All children have birth parents. Children are children...they love life, they love to run, they love to play and they need to experience the process of childhood. Children need character and self esteem to progress effectively, and training helps capitalize on these areas of development.

During our lifetime all of us have heard "I am not my brother's keeper." If you are a foster

parent, you indeed have assumed the responsibility of being your brother's keeper. Our society and culture are now both saturated with children being raised on time schedules, which totally exclude them from expressing their love and feelings even to their own parents. Given even more time and opportunities, some parents still turn a deaf ear, ignoring their children's needs. We need to pursue at whatever personal cost that it may require from us and inventory of additional training to expedite the hidden and undeveloped talents of these neglected children.

Reluctantly we admit that times are changing...foster care providers argue that years of experience can be the best teacher, and in rare cases it may work. To be an effective foster parent you must approach and absorb every training class and instructor with vigor and enthusiasm. I realize that sometimes the classes are too long, the seats get too hard, we become restless, and Lord forbid that the speaker be boring, but we must without any reserve, endure minor hardship if we care enough to see a change in our placements. Every training hour you receive will now, or in the future, be a valuable assessment tool to further the relationship between you and the child.

Special needs, abused and neglected children are not individually able to dig themselves out of holes they've been placed in, especially if we attend training sessions out of obligation, never taking notes, daydreaming and never even knowing what the course was about. Your arguments and excuses are that everything is too fast paced, that I don't have the time...well, after all what is time, when you're trying to mend a broken heart. It's not always about you or me...it's about our children who are our shadows and cling onto us for love and guidance. ☺

*Respectfully Submitted by
Stanley R. Bennett
Sub-Regional VP, Central Two*



Would you like to speak out? Please submit your opinion for consideration to Richard Wampler, Editor at the address posted on page 2.

The information provided in this section is compiled of opinions of Adoptive and Foster Parents in the Association, and does not necessarily reflect the views of the board or the editor.

**All Entrants
Must Be
Adoptive or
Foster
Children**



ALL COUNTY-ALL REGION FOSTER-ADOPTIVE ART CONTEST

Calling All Artists and Artist Wannabe's

Any Age, Any Art Medium

First, Second and Third Prizes for Each Age Group

Art Must Be Based On

One of the Following Topics:

- My Foster Family
- My Adoptive Family
- My Favorite Animal
- My Favorite Sport
- What I Want To Be When I Grow Up

Ages 3-5

Ages 6-8

Ages 9-12

Ages 13-15

Ages 16-18

Winning entries will be posted in the next issue of SEEKER

**Artwork can be mailed to:
Rich Wampler - Art Contest
110 Southern Court
McDonough, GA 30252**

**All Entries
Must be
postmarked
No later than
December 31, 1999**

(photographs can be sent if art is fragile or too large to mail)

Artwork will be returned prior to judging

Please label artwork with name of artist, age, topic and return address