

# In the Loop

## EDITOR:

Ruth L. Snyder  
Box 463  
Glendon, AB T0A 1P0  
(780) 635-2190  
[rls67@mcsnet.ca](mailto:rls67@mcsnet.ca)

Submissions for next newsletter  
are due by July 31, 2014

Please submit your articles or  
pictures on school, fall, and  
Thanksgiving.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**ADOPTION PROFILE** 2, 3

**POEM (IN HER SHOES)** 4

**MY WORKER** 5

**MENTAL FITNESS** 6

**CHOOSING A CAMP** 7, 8

**DOGS & CATS: SAFETY** 9

**FASD TIP SHEET** 10

**KIDS THESE DAYS** 11

**BOOK REVIEW** 12

**FOSTER CARE SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP** 12



NORTH CENTRAL ALBERTA  
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

## Thriving or surviving?

by Ruth L. Snyder

When you hear the words, “summer holiday” what images pop into your head? For most of us, summer is not relaxing; our children no longer have a school routine and there are more daylight hours. Here are some things I’ve found help our family thrive over summer instead of just surviving:

- Plan ahead, but be flexible; focus on having fun; adjust your expectations
- Maintain regular bedtimes and meal times as much as possible
- Involve your children in planning; let each child choose an activity or destination
- Always have a back-up plan; weather and kids don’t always cooperate
- Plan some down time into the schedule; you don’t always have to be doing things

### More ideas:

- 101 Fun Things to Do in the Summer [www.parenting.com/article/fun-things-to-do-summer](http://www.parenting.com/article/fun-things-to-do-summer)
- 30 fun things to do with your kids this summer [http://www.canadianliving.com/moms/kids/30\\_fun\\_things\\_to\\_do\\_with\\_your\\_kids\\_this\\_summer.php](http://www.canadianliving.com/moms/kids/30_fun_things_to_do_with_your_kids_this_summer.php)
- Things to do <http://travelalberta.com/Things%20to%20Do.aspx>



## Adoption profile

*“Like a  
welcome  
summer rain,  
humor may  
suddenly  
cleanse and  
cool the  
earth, the air  
and you.”*

Langston Hughes



This lovely sibling group of seven requires a very special family within which to grow up and remain together! A family able to offer a great deal of structure and energy, along with a loving, nurturing approach to parenting would best meet the needs of these deserving youngsters.

William, born in 2000, is the eldest of this sibling group. He has a quirky sense of humor and is constantly making others laugh. William likes to ride his bike, swim, and play soccer as well as laser tag. He does well in school and is an active participant in classroom discussions. William enjoys time with his peers, but often prefers to work on his own. Ongoing, hands-on support will assist William in managing his social interactions with greater confidence and success.

Justin, born in 2002, is a resilient, yet sensitive youngster. He is always willing to help out around the house, and enjoys taking on a leadership role with these special projects. Justin likes

keeping active, cherishing times when he can swim, bike ride, play soccer, or lace up his skates for some hockey.

Justin is a good student who consistently demonstrates a solid academic effort. As a child who can be hesitant in forming close relationships, he would benefit from ongoing therapeutic support, particularly in times of significant transition.

Denom, born in 2004, is a happy and easy going child. He is an enthusiastic learner, and engages particularly well with new experiences. Origami, drawing, coloring and molding with clay are his preferred ways of expressing his creative side. He is active and loves to swim, play basketball and of course soccer, his all-time favorite! Denom has a love of animals of all kinds, and shows great gentleness and care in his interactions with them. Denom does well with peers, and has lots of friends both at school and in the community.

(Continued on page 3)

## Adoption profile

(Continued from page 2)

He is working hard to accept responsibility for his actions, and with support is continuing to make great gains.

Jonah, born in 2005, is a loving and affectionate little boy. He loves being active, bike riding and playing hockey. Academically, Jonah does well in a play-based school environment. He quickly masters classroom routines and enjoys participating in many activities. He does have some challenges when with his peers, so benefits from ongoing adult supervision and positive reinforcement to ensure healthy interactions.

Sage, born in 2007, is an outgoing and social little boy with a very sweet disposition. He is a hard worker who delights in helping out around the house and at school. He takes real pride in a job well done! Sage has a fondness for reading about cars, animals and science. He also likes to be active and is learning to swim. To ensure he meets his developmental potential, ongoing monitoring will be necessary.

Sara, born in 2010, is a friendly and loving little girl who can almost always be found sporting a big smile! She is compassionate and tries to assist when others are hurt or unhappy. A busy little girl, she loves to explore the wonders of the outdoors, and is especially delighted by camping

season. She also enjoys swimming and riding her tricycle. Sara attends a preschool program where she receives individual support to assist her in managing her developmental needs.

Neepin, born in 2013, is an inquisitive and curious toddler. Like most children his age, he enjoys exploring the world around him. He loves dancing and music, showing a real preference for jazz and opera! A happy little guy, he loves to laugh and be tickled. Neepin is a very determined fellow, already wanting to do many things independently. Due to his young age, his future needs have yet to be determined. A family prepared to monitor his progress and access any necessary resources as time passes is necessary

These siblings deserve the opportunity to be raised together within a loving and committed family. A two parent home, where structure, consistency, and routine are present in full measure will see the greatest success in becoming a family. A strong support system would be of benefit.

-Prepared March 2014

*If you'd like more information about this sibling group, please contact your local worker.*



*“Water, taken in moderation, cannot hurt anybody.”*

Mark Twain

**Learn to stretch when you wake up. It boosts circulation and digestion and eases back pain.**

Back track in her shoes, go where she has been  
 Look through her haunted eyes, see what she has seen  
 Listen to her aching heart, steady and strong  
 And wonder why it's still beating - it's been broken  
 For so long

Stroll through her memories, the good lost in the bad  
 And try to understand the things that make her sad  
 Underneath the empty layers find the troubled soul  
 Whose given up on life and all her dreams and goals  
 See how she's been knocked down again and again  
 Look beneath the mask she wears to hide the pain  
 Then try not to judge her for the path that she  
 has taken

She's already been condemned, left lonely and  
 forsaken.

Maybe reach out, offer her your hand  
 Life doesn't always work out the way we planned.  
 It's so easy to give up and no longer try  
 So we should all remember but for the grace  
 of God go I.

Karen Ahlberg  
 Dec/2013



"Summer means happy times and  
 good sunshine. It means going to the  
 beach, going to Disneyland, having  
 fun. Brian Wilson

## My worker: Pheb Goulet

by Jan Beecher



Pheb Goulet has been a Foster and Kinship Care Support Worker with North Central Alberta Child and Family Services for seven years.

"I think foster and kinship parents are the most amazing people," she notes. "They make these connections with the children that are in their home and that connection continues into adulthood. Being able to watch that is so rewarding."

Pheb knew about kinship care and adoption long before she became a social worker. In addition to their four biological children, she and her husband have three kinship and two adopted children in their family. Three of the children are still at home; the youngest is 13.

She waited until her three older children were finished school before she began her own career. Now Pheb believes she has one of the best jobs within Child and Family Services.

"I love what I do. I have seen kids go into a new home and they are so sad and scared, and then I come back a few weeks later and they are smiling and happy."

Pheb works out of the Westlock office and lives on an acreage southwest of town. After years of living in towns and cities she finds the wide open spaces of the country relaxing. To add to a healthy lifestyle, she starts every day with 15 minutes of exercise. "It really helps me to feel good for the rest of the day."

Over the years she has seen some changes within foster care, mostly for the better. She lists the screening process for foster homes and the home assessments as some the areas where she has seen improvement.

Pheb says she has learned a lot of lessons throughout the years but, most importantly, she's learned to never think that she's seen it all or that she knows it all. "I can still be surprised."

*"What nature delivers to us is never stale. Because what nature creates has eternity in it."*

Isaac B. Singer



**Always giving and never taking is a fast road to fatigue. Make time to give to yourself and receive from others.**

## Simple ways to practice mental fitness



*"If you have  
a garden  
and a  
library, you  
have  
everything  
you need."*

Marcus Tullius Cicero

Here are some simple ways we can all start to practice mental fitness suggested by the Canadian Mental Health Association.

**Daydream** - Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a dream location. Breathe slowly and deeply. Whether it's a beach, a mountaintop, a hushed forest or a favourite room from your past, let the comforting environment wrap you in a sensation of peace and tranquility.

**"Collect" positive emotional moments** - Make it a point to recall times when you have experienced pleasure, comfort, tenderness, confidence, or other positive emotions.

**Learn ways to cope with negative thoughts** - Negative thoughts can be insistent and loud. Learn to interrupt them. Don't try to block them completely (that never works), but don't let them take over. Try distracting yourself, if you can't solve the problem right away.

**Do one thing at a time** - For example, when you are out for a walk or spending time with friends, turn off your cell phone and stop making mental "to do" lists. Take in all the sights, sounds and smells you encounter.

**Exercise** - Regular physical activity improves psychological well-being and can reduce depression and anxiety. Joining an exercise group or a gym can also reduce loneliness, since it connects you with a new set of people sharing a common goal. Try your local recreation centre for free or low cost classes. Join - or start - a walking club in your neighbourhood.

**Enjoy hobbies** - Taking up a hobby brings balance to your life by allowing you to do something you enjoy because you want to do it, free of pressure of everyday tasks. It also keeps your brain active.

**Set Personal Goals** - Goals don't have to be ambitious. You might decide to finish that book you started three years ago; to take a walk around the block every day; to try a new sport; to call your friends instead of waiting for the phone to ring. Whatever goal you set, reaching it will build confidence and a sense of satisfaction.

**Keep a Journal (or even talk to the wall!)** - Expressing yourself after a stressful day can help you gain perspective, release tension and even boost your body's resistance to illness.

**Share Humour** - Life often gets too serious, so when you hear or see something that makes you smile or laugh, share it with someone you know. A little humour can go a long way to keeping us mentally fit!

**Volunteer** - Volunteering is called the "win-win" activity because helping others makes us feel good about ourselves. At the same time, it widens our social network, provides us with new learning experiences and can bring balance to our lives.

**Treat Yourself Well** - Find simple pleasures that bring joy to your life. Read a book. Cook yourself a good meal. See a movie. Call a friend or relative you haven't talked to in ages. Whatever it is, do it just for you. Treating yourself doesn't have to involve a lot of money or time.

**Start today!**

# Choosing a camp for your kids

By Sheila Webster

Not all camps are created equal. It is wise to do a lot of research before you commit the care of your children to a week away from you.

A few years back I had a very negative experience with a camp that served children with Reactive Attachment Disorder. Having a couple of kids with a similar diagnosis, I checked into it. My kids were excited because it was a family camp where they used horses for therapy. I was excited too as the camp made a lot of guarantees about how they would understand my children's special needs and promised we would walk away with more tools in our toolbox.

The short version of this story is that my kids got us kicked out of the camp, where the ratio of adults was about 1 for every three kids. Less than 36 hours into camp, after unpacking two vehicles piled high with our necessities, we were asked to leave en masse and I was told that no one should have to deal with kids like mine. (Apparently they weren't good listeners.)

What went wrong? I had checked references, looked through recommendations, and I even went to the CEO's farm to check the status of

the horses and their temperament. The kids in my care at the time were between five and fourteen, and all vulnerable despite being somewhat 'oppositional'.

In retrospect, I believe because my foster home had a strong family identity, the children appeared unified in their defiant behaviors and the leaders did not see the children as individuals but more as a 'tribe.' This overwhelmed the camp staff and they failed to even try. However, I learned a lot from that experience.

Summer camp is about the kids and them having a break from life. Each of my kids was an individual, with hopes, dreams, desires and likes, all different from our family unit. Even two of the kids who were half-brother and sister were entirely different.

Other pure family camp experiences were always a great and crazy time for our family, and we still have fond memories of the beach, food, campfires and friends. Camp for every kid should be like that—a magical week of memories and something to look forward to each year.

*(Continued on page 8)*

*"Remember  
that  
children,  
marriages,  
and flower  
gardens  
reflect the  
kind of care  
they get."*

H. Jackson Brown Jr.



*“Flowers  
always make  
people better,  
happier, and  
more helpful;  
they are  
sunshine, food  
and medicine  
for the soul.”*

Luther Burbank



## Choosing a camp for your kids

(Continued from page 7)

**Here are things I have found to be helpful in choosing camps for my kids:**

- Have a back-up plan
- View the camp if possible
- Check their accreditation status (listed on provincial websites) or on the camp website or brochure. It can be a great camp without accreditation, but when they are accredited the requirements for staff training, incident reporting, etc. are more stringent. If they are not accredited what is their risk management policy and staff training. Do they have qualified people running the equipment?
- How does the camp deal with discipline issues?
- Do you know other people who have gone there?
- Ask your child this question: At the end of the week, if nothing else goes right at camp, what is the one thing you hope does go right? The answer might surprise you, and is often that they made one friend. It is expectations management and helps them focus on a positive. Some of my kids have enjoyed camps more that offered little in the way of attractions and extras but majored in simple fun and relationships. These are the camps they still pledge their allegiance to.
- For older kids, sometimes acquiring skills that catch them up in other areas are a win-win. Two of my kids who were developmentally and socially behind, gained more social skills and friends at a drama camp that also offered high school credits.

Make sure you know the rules as well; one camp did not allow the kids to phone home. Although it was tempting not to create an exception, I insisted that one of my newer kids be allowed to access the phone three times in five days as he was fairly new in my home and didn't need another instance of not being allowed to contact someone he was connected to. It gave him the feeling of belonging and independence at the same time. Sometimes being at a camp without other kids from the same house is a bonus, as there are less instances of tattling about their bad habits.

As a family, we recovered from the embarrassment of having to leave that camp and eventually it became one of those epic family stories. I didn't have a backup plan that week, but came up with one fast. We swam every day at the pool, played games and picnicked in the park, ate lots of popsicles and roasted marshmallows over a candle as we lay on our bellies and told stories of our childhoods.

*Sheila Webster has biological, foster, kinship and adopted children in her life. As a marriage and family counsellor, her experience over 24 years helps her understand the diversity in families. She also enjoys six grandchildren and a writing career.*

## Dogs and cats: Learn their language

Dogs and cats can't express their feelings verbally, but animal body language can speak volumes. Children, as well as caregivers, should learn to recognize warning signals from dogs and cats.



### Dog aggression warning signs:

- Ears are laid back
- Tail is down and tense
- Muzzle is tense, accompanied by low growling or snarling
- Head down, avoiding eye contact
- Teeth are exposed
- Backing into a corner if inside
- Dogs that have dominant type aggression are

very confident in new situations. Dominant aggressive dogs have very distinctive body language. They stand with their heads erect and their ears bent forward. They carry their tails proudly and stare intently at strange people and pets. They stand still facing the new individual and emit a low steady growl while they curl their lips and expose their teeth.

### Cat aggression warning signs:

- Ears are upright, rotating slightly forward
- Ears can be folded back against their head in an attack posture
- Legs are straight and stiff
- Tail is stiff and lowered; a cat may swish tail back and forth rapidly
- Fur is raised, including on the tail



If a dog or cat is showing any warning signs, do NOT approach the animal. A dog or cat who is unpleasantly surprised by a child's behaviour may snap or scratch before there is even an opportunity to show a warning sign. Children should be taught to treat pets respectfully at all times. It's far more effective to avoid upsetting an animal than it is to avoid an animal you've upset.

*\*\*The above safety tips are for information purposes only, there is no guarantee when it comes to the safety of people with animals. All that we can do is offer advice/tips that we have found to work for us at the SPCA.*

*“A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust.”*

Gertrude Jekyll



## FASD tip sheet

<http://edmontonfetalalcoholnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/fasd-tip-sheet1.pdf>

### TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR CHILD BE SUCCESSFUL IN GROUP SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

*"Tears of joy are like the summer rain drops pierced by sunbeams."*

Hosea Ballou



1. Remember that coaches or other group leaders care about children. They want every child to have a good season or experience in the group. Talk to them about the things that are hard for your child. If you share information about your child with the adult group leader, they will know more about how to help your child succeed.
2. Share some information about FASD with the group leader or coach. They need to understand why your child needs longer to do things or has some trouble following directions. They also benefit from knowing about what usually happens when your child becomes stressed, and what interventions usually help. You can provide them with both general information about FASD and child specific information about FASD.
3. If your child has a close friend, try to have them join a group together. It will help your child to go with someone she or he knows. It can be beneficial too for their friend to be their buddy for the sporting activities.
4. Your child's friends and team mates can be a support to him and can help him make good choices.
5. Help your child to choose activities that he enjoys and has fun doing. This gives him a chance to be successful.
6. Regular group lessons or activities can be quite rigid about what needs to be learned or performed in a set amount of time. Many children with FASD need to repeat more times to become more skillful, or they may need to repeat a level to master it before moving on to the next level. If your child doesn't want to repeat a level until she gains the needed skills, find out if your community offers one-on-one lessons for children with special needs. For instance, the Arc, YMCA or YWCA would be able to help you find out more about lessons in your area.
7. If your child gets overexcited or overstimulated in groups because noise, bright lights or the the confusion of many children doing lots of things at once are hard for her to cope with, help her before there is a problem. Work with the group leader and organize a quiet activity for all the participants to do before settling down to practice, rehearsal, or the regular group activity. This will help the child with FASD to keep from getting overexcited.
8. Supervise, supervise, supervise. Go to your child's team practices, games, rehearsals, and meetings (if possible). Be an adult volunteer!
9. Practice with your child to help him learn the new skills.
10. As an observer, help your child by explaining things. Watch for inappropriate behaviour, and help her if she misunderstands something. Work out specific hand signals or a special facial expression in advance; use them to communicate a message to help your child when he cannot (or doesn't want to) leave the group to get support or direction from you, or when you cannot join the group without interrupting the activity.



# Kids These Days: Celebrating Graduation

by **Dr. David Rideout, Regional Director**



Last month I had the privilege of attending two very special graduations back in my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

My only sibling has been a single mom for several years, after her husband died suddenly in 2006. Since then she has been a phenomenal support for her three children and absolutely determined in her commitment to see them be successful in life. Some of her efforts, and theirs, was evident in the graduations I attended in May - one in recognition of her son completing high school and the other acknowledging her daughter's completion of her first degree at university.

Those two occasions reminded me once again that graduations are important celebrations of

the accomplishments of students but also of those family members and others who have supported them through the years.

As a teacher and principal for many years, I have watched as countless scrubbed and smiling young men and women donned cap and gown to receive their diploma. For many of them, that journey to graduation was smooth sailing. Those were the kids for whom learning came easy. Others had to try a little harder. They were the students who struggled with math or language or reading comprehension; the kids who studied hard to pull off a C-grade.

Regardless of how hard or fast the journey, each student who takes the stage becomes a lifetime member of an elite fraternity. They are high school graduates. And that is cause for celebration.

The teacher in me never tires of celebrating another graduating class. But I am particularly proud of one extraordinary group of young people who will be climbing the stage this month. They are graduating youth in care - young people who have been living in foster or

group homes. These kids have overcome significant personal, social, financial and sometimes physical challenges to get to that diploma. Learning is not easy when you're coping with grief and loss.

So I'm pleased to report that this year we will celebrate the graduation of 20 youth in care - the highest number that we've ever seen in North Central Alberta. This notable achievement is a testament to the determination and resilience of these young people. It's also a testament to the supportive foster and kinship providers who opened their hearts and homes to kids in crisis.

Some of these youth won't have a mom or dad cheering them come graduation day. Or an uncle who can fly across the country to share in the celebration. So please join me in congratulating them as they step into that elite fraternity and a bright future filled with possibility. Well done, graduates.

*Dr. David Rideout is a former teacher, principal, and school board superintendent. He is a father of two adult sons and the Regional Director of the North Central Alberta Child and Family Services.*

**Low blood sugar can stress you out. Eat regular small, healthy meals and snack on vegetables.**

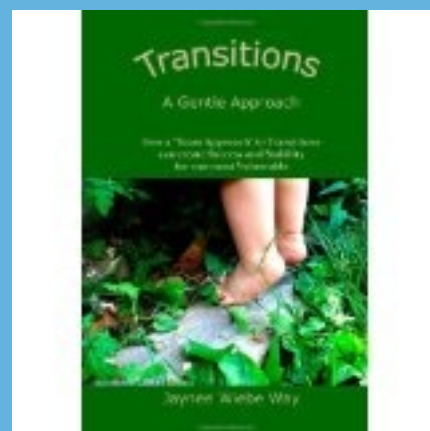
# Book Review

**by Ruth L. Snyder**

Birth parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, kinship families, and social workers experience diverse challenges when transitioning a child. Sometimes we have choices about how transitions happen, and sometimes we don't. Unfortunately children are often traumatized during these transitions.

In her book, *Transitions: A Gentle Approach*, Jaynee Wiebe Way shares her experience and expertise, urging those involved with children in care to be intentional about transitions. She starts by reminding us of the importance of attachment and how this is often disrupted during transitions. Using attachment as the foundation, Jaynee shares a team approach she has found useful. "The transitioning of a vulnerable child from one home to another is a delicate dance and the central figure is the child." Jaynee shares suggestions and tips for those transitioning children out of their care as well as for those welcoming children into their home. She understands, from personal experience, the powerful emotions involved for people on both sides.

This book is written from the perspective of transitioning one preschool child, but many of the principles will be useful for an older child or sibling groups as well. Jaynee has put together a useful resource that will make you think, ask questions, and perhaps change your practices.



"In committing ourselves to vulnerable children, we must always remember that they have suffered in numerous ways . . . It is our responsibility to do our utmost to diminish effects of their previous trauma by ensuring that we do not further traumatize our children when bringing them into our care." Jaynee Wiebe Way



Names: \_\_\_\_\_ new membership      renewal

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Department Foster Family

City/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Foster Family

Postal Code:/Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Adoption Family

Membership fee: \$25.00 - Membership Expires December 31st

Make cheques payable to *Northern 7 Regional Foster Care Society*