

In the Loop

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Submissions for next newsletter
are due by October 31, 2014

Please submit your articles or
pictures on winter, celebrations,
and new beginnings.

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**NORTH CENTRAL ALBERTA
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES**

Back to . . .

by Ruth L. Snyder

September. For many of us this means back to school, back to a busier schedule, back to music lessons and sports. I've been reminded lately that caregivers usually think of themselves last. While you are helping your children prepare for all the activities that September brings, make sure you reserve some time to think about ways to "recharge" personally or with your significant other. Here are some ideas I'm implementing or going back to:

- ♦ Starting the day with something relaxing. For me this means getting up early for some quiet time to read my Bible, pray, and do some writing.
- ♦ Choosing healthy habits. I'm continuing on with my health and fitness journey. During the

summer, some of my habits slipped. Going back to a regular schedule makes it easier for me to be more consistent in sleeping, physical activity and healthy eating.

- ♦ Setting boundaries. I've been thinking about what is truly important to me and have started to say "No" to some things.
- ♦ Taking a break from technology. I'm choosing not to use any technology after supper.
- ♦ Nourishing your creativity. I'm being more intentional about taking walks, making up stories, reading about new things, and trying new things.

What are you going back to?



Adoption profile

Shaylynn

*"If a fellow
isn't thankful
for what he's
got, he isn't
likely to be
thankful for
what he's
going to get."*

-Frank A. Clark



Shaylynn, born in 2004, is an appealing, rather tall for her age, girl with a fair complexion that complements her blonde hair and blue eyes. She generally presents as a happy, loving and lively little girl who enjoys going to the park to play and going for walks. Listening to music, dancing, and going to the mall are also activities she'll happily engage in.

Shaylynn attends a specialized school program, where she receives assistance in enhancing her development. School attendance is a pleasure for her and, being busy and high energy, she

particularly enjoys "having fun in gym"! The support she has received has allowed for consistent gains in her ability to communicate, develop independence skills, and progress with behaviors. Shaylynn responds best within a structured and consistent environment, and works well when positively reinforced for her good efforts.

To best meet her needs, Shaylynn requires a skilled and loving adoptive family with an abundance of patience, realistic expectations, and an ability to provide for consistent supervision. This deserving little girl has the capacity to adapt to either a single or two parent home, and would enjoy the presence of either younger or older children. A commitment to, and an understanding of, the need to ensure specialized community resources are sought and sustained now, and into the future, is essential.

Prepared: October, 2011
Photo up-dated February 2013



If you would like more information, please contact your local worker.

Craft Idea: Story Cubes

Adapted from <http://www.redtedart.com/2010/11/05/how-to-make-story-cubes-beautiful-memories/>

Why Story Cubes?

Story telling has many benefits, including: bonding, bedtime wind down, creative development, improved communication, improving decision making skills, reworking the day, understanding emotions and people better, introducing family values and ideas, and even teaching business skills. However, story telling is hard when you are out of practice. Story cubes provide prompts to get you started.

Materials:

- ◆ 6-8 wooden cubes (available at craft stores)
- ◆ Varnish
- ◆ Paintbrush
- ◆ Newspaper (to cover work area)
- ◆ Fine marker Pen (0.7 nib)
- ◆ Magazines to cut pictures out of
- ◆ Modge Podge
- ◆ Acrylic paint (for colour options)



Creating your story cubes:

1. Varnish each cube (to prevent marker from running into the grain); Set the blocks aside to dry. (Check instructions on your varnish can for suggested drying time.) You may need to touch up a couple of sides with a second coat.
2. Decide on some prompts. Ask your children for ideas or use some of the following: animals, food or drink, colours, objects, emotions, methods of transport, etc. Use some of your child's favourite things.
3. Draw your prompt ideas onto the cubes using a fine marker pen. (If you don't want to draw, find pictures from magazines to cut out and glue on. If you do this, you'll probably want to cover the pictures with a layer of Modge Podge to protect the pictures and make the blocks more durable.)



Using your Story Cubes:

1. Have someone toss the cubes
2. Take turns telling a story using all the images face-up on the cubes. (One person may tell the whole story, or you could take turns with each person using one image and adding onto the story.)
3. If you need more of a challenge, require that the prompts be used in a predetermined order.
4. For younger children, make it easier by only requiring a short phrase or sentence.
5. Have fun!



"Gratitude is an art of painting an adversity into a lovely picture."

-Kak Sri

Welcoming Teenagers

By Melanie Fischer



"I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought; and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder."

-G. K. Chesterton

When we showed up on our Harley at my Uncle's sixty-fifth birthday party, I didn't expect to meet a teenaged girl who would soon become a child we would parent. We were just wrapping up our child-raising years. Our girl was about to head off to university, and our boy had recently started his own family. We were about to dive into an "empty nest," hence the Harley. We were a blended family, so this would be the first time in sixteen years of marriage that it would be just the two of us.

My husband and I had never entertained the idea of bringing any other children into our home. After meeting this sixteen-year-old troubled girl who was unsettled in her current living situation and labelled as PGO (a term that we would soon become familiar with) and living next door to my Aunt and Uncle, we had a persistent knock on our hearts to take her in. We all communicated mostly through texts for a few months after first meeting. One morning I typed into my phone "Good morning Sunshine!" She then told me that ever since she was a little girl she wrote an ideal mom list on every birthday. On this list was a mom who called her "Sunshine" and a mom who rode a Harley. The pieces continued to fit together and it became indisputable that this young lady was to become part of our family. She moved in at the end of the school year and continues to live with us now in a kinship arrangement as she completes high school.

As I reflect on last year and prepare to assist her through what will likely be her final high school year, I've pulled out three key principles that I have learned.

1. Teenagers do not usually want to be told anything, but they will watch everything. They feel more empowered by learning through watching as this form of learning is on their own terms. Teach through actions and bite your tongue when the urge arises to teach through words.
2. Not every battle is worth fighting. Let go of the little stuff and wisely address the issues that have the potential to seriously affect the child's future.
3. A child who is older that enters a new environment is just plain going to have different views, morals and beliefs than the rest of the household. When the child is genuinely listened to, you may understand that there are viewpoints outside of your own, and they may not all be wrong.

What a privilege it is to be chosen to parent a foster child who is in what may be seen as the most difficult years; but yet are the years with the potential for the greatest impact. What an honour to be one of the shaping hands of this soon-to-be-adult—a hand placed in the gutters of their inquisitive life, a hand that can fill the cracks in their lives in order to prevent them from slipping through them, a hand that may very well be the one that will release them into this big world.

Melanie Fischer is a writerpreneur, wife of 17 years, and a mother of a blended family of 3 children. She has a passion for living life the way she was created to, From fly fishing, drumming, riding on the back of her husband's Harley, and volunteering for local organizations, she never seems to run out of things to write about.

Back to School Tips

By Sheila Webster

Preparing for back to school can be overwhelming if your child has behavioural or learning issues. However, school may provide an opportunity to have some free time as a parent too! Here are a few simple tips to decrease some of the normal stress of back to school.

1. Decorate their paper lunch bag or plastic sandwich bag.

Even when I had nine kids in the house, especially during stressful times, I would take a few extra minutes each night to either decorate their paper lunch bags with their name, and a little sticker or something. Little notes like, "Miss you," "Love you," or "Have a good day" take seconds to write but can give a kid the feeling he is not alone in his struggles. It's a reminder someone is on his side and thinking of him.

2. Write individualized notes.

The older kids especially seemed to love the extra attention they got with individualized notes at different times in their school year that would say something bigger than the lunch bag notes. "I'm proud of you for doing..." "Hey I noticed that you have really matured in this..." "I enjoyed spending time with you..." These reminded them they were individuals and they were noticed. It takes discipline to do this, but less time than you would think.

3. Provide special treats.

Once a week, I would put something more than the normal fare into the lunches, something that catered to each child's unique tastes. It takes effort, but the dividends paid back are always more than worth it. Even the surliest child has a hard time not feeling special when she knows you remembered something that was her favourite and she randomly finds it in her lunch bag.

4. Use see-through organization.

Take the extra time to use a large Ziploc, or a more tailored plastic zipper envelope with your child's name on, to put notes to his teacher and things to remember.

5. Jot notes for meetings.

Keeping a note reminder log of challenges your child is having or things you want to mention in meetings to a teacher or social worker is essential to troubleshooting challenges he or she is facing. Even if it is the same behaviour or challenge, there are always new players and context to how they deal or adjust to things.

(Continued on page 6)

"For each new morning with its light,

For rest and shelter of the night,

For health and food, for love and friends,

For everything Thy goodness sends."

~Ralph Waldo Emerson



Back to school tips

(Continued from page 5)

6. Transition Magic.

For the child with transition problems at school, practicing flexibility at home can build some skill and resilience. One child I have long term, initially would take a whole twenty minutes of a sixty minute class to transition with his educational assistant's help. In less than six months we reduced the transition time to between five and ten minutes per class, just by intentionally practicing flexibility at home.

another buying groceries, another going to the hardware store. Take the few extra minutes to discuss something in the store they are interested in. Buy a hot chocolate or cool drink on the way home and enjoy the drive. An added bonus is putting his or her favourite radio station on and letting them relax.

To build rapport and trust as well as invest in a healthy self-esteem for your child, takes organization and discipline on your part. In the long run I have always found that it has been the little things have built a stronger foundation for them to trust you with themselves and to listen to you when they need to.

7. Building Individual time.

Each kid has a different errand he or she likes to run with their parent, or foster parent. Use it as time for them to debrief and feel cared for and listened to. One may enjoy going to get pet food with you,

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.

"Gratitude is a quality similar to electricity: it must be produced and discharged and used up in order to exist at all."

~William Faulkner



School lunch ideas

15 School Lunch Ideas They'll Love - <http://www.canadianfamily.ca/food/15-school-lunch-ideas-theyll-love/>

25 Quick and Easy School Lunches to Pack for Your Kids - <http://www.bonappetit.com/recipes/family-meals/slideshow/25-quick-and-easy-school-lunches-to-pack-for-your-kids/?slide=1>

School Lunches: Ideas for a month! - [http://](http://www.momendeavors.com/2013/08/a-month-of-kid-approved-school-lunches-easy-creative-ideas.html)

www.momendeavors.com/2013/08/a-month-of-kid-approved-school-lunches-easy-creative-ideas.html

Smartphone Safety

Adapted from mobility.protectchildren.ca

Remember that while smartphones provide communication and safety benefits, they also pose safety risks. Parents need to understand enough about technology so that they can discuss issues and safety strategies with their children.

RISKS:

Text Messages

- ◆ Personal information may be sent to the wrong address or shared with other users without the sender's consent
- ◆ A child/adolescent could receive harassing or unwanted messages which contain inappropriate material
- ◆ If a person's phone plan doesn't provide unlimited messaging, your child could incur huge bills without a parent's knowledge

Camera/Video Phones

- ◆ Photos or videos can be altered and posted by others without the consent of the person in the photo
- ◆ Unless you turn off the location services on your phone, every photo or video has a "tag" attached which will disclose the user's location
- ◆ If a public facility has banned cameras or videos, and your child takes a picture or video, he or she could face criminal charges
- ◆ Passing notes in school has been replaced by snapping photos on cell phones and sharing them with friends—often involving nude shots.

Internet/Mobile TV Access

- ◆ Mobile phones with internet capabilities are vulnerable to the same viruses and other malicious content computers are
- ◆ If a child's phone plan does not have unlimited internet/TV access, he or she could incur large bills without a parent's knowledge
- ◆ Mobile phones may be a distraction at school

Global Positioning System (GPS)

Most cell phones are equipped with GPS, allowing users to be located within a few metres, unless the location services are turned off

APPS

- ◆ Many apps are available for free
- ◆ Many messaging, chat, and social networking apps allow you to easily connect with random individuals.

"Courtesies of a small and trivial character are the ones which strike deepest in the grateful and appreciating heart."

~Henry Clay



*"Gratitude is
the fairest
blossom which
springs from
the soul."*

~Henry Ward Beecher



Smartphone Safety (Continued from page 9)

- ◆ Personal information entered into a profile on an app is made available to other users of the service.
- ◆ Gaming apps provide the opportunity to connect with random individuals. Users connecting through games are allowed to chat with each other while playing the game.
- ◆ Apps can be hidden on the device using folders and pages not visible during a quick view of the device

SAFETY TIPS

- ◆ Make sure you know what features are included on a phone before you or your child purchase it. (You may want to download "Questions to ask when purchasing a mobile phone" from http://mobility.protectchildren.ca/pdfs/C3PMobility_QuestionsToAsk_en.pdf)
- ◆ Explore the possibility of blocking adult content using settings on the device or a parental control app
- ◆ Set clear guidelines for your child regarding usage
- ◆ If your child has voicemail, make sure he or she does NOT include his or her name in the greeting message
- ◆ Remind your child that every text message, photo, or video can be traced
- ◆ Make sure your child is aware of apps and services which will cost extra money
- ◆ Discuss the meaning of true friendship and healthy relationships. Make sure your child understands sexually graphic material doesn't equal intimacy
- ◆ Inform your teen he or she doesn't need to reply to unsolicited or unwanted messages. Teach him or her how to save the messages to show a safe adult and discuss the ability to cut off communication with any individual who is harassing him or her
- ◆ Remind your teen how easy it is to lose control of texts, photos, and videos
- ◆ Discuss times/places where it is inappropriate or illegal to send photographs or videos and the consequences of sending nude/sexual photographs
- ◆ Visit www.kidsintheknow.ca for safety tools for children from Kindergarten to high school
- ◆ Your advice and guidance for mobile use will need to adjust and change with your child's age and changes in technology. There are age-specific safety strategies available for 10-12, 13-15, and 16-17 year-olds at: <http://mobility.protectchildren.ca/safety-strategies/age-specific-safety-strategies-for-parents>

REPORT ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION TO:

cybertip.ca

Kids These Days: The Village Walls

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



In my world of child welfare, I am frequently reminded of the truth in the popular saying that, “It takes a village to raise a child.” I recall hearing one recent example of a troubled youth who hitchhiked across our province and arrived homeless and alone in a small, northern Alberta community. A concerned mom, who was not his own mother, gave him a safe place to stay. Other youth in the community invited him to play hockey and loaned him some equipment. Another community member noticed the boy’s mismatched skates and raised a few dollars to buy him new ones. Now able to hone his skating skills, that young man has become an excellent hockey player—and was recently scouted to a junior league.

Another story that comes to mind is about a young mother who had experienced a brain injury. Tasks that used to be effortless—reading, writing, shopping and caring for her young daughter—had become difficult. Not surprisingly, this young family was struggling. Our Child and Family Services connected with the local Friendship Centre in their community to assign a Family Support Worker to help them. That worker helped the

family to access services such as daycare subsidies, financial assistance for prescription coverage, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, and a home-life training. The arrangements even included literacy training to help the mom re-learn her own reading skills, just as her own little girl was starting kindergarten. Bit by bit, this family is growing stronger and more independent.

Stories like these remind us that everyone can have a role in raising the children of our villages. To care for them and keep them safe. To equip their families with what they need to better care for their children. To empower them to fulfill their dreams. When children and families are safe and empowered, they are free to reach their highest potential.

These stories also show that communities understand the social issues they’re facing, and that it takes connections to find solutions.

There are new regional Family and Community Engagement Councils planned for Alberta this fall to give communities a direct avenue to identify and discuss social issues that are important to them. The new councils will focus on building parents, capable citizens, and community leaders. It’s a positive ripple that benefits all of society.

You can find out more about the new Family and Community

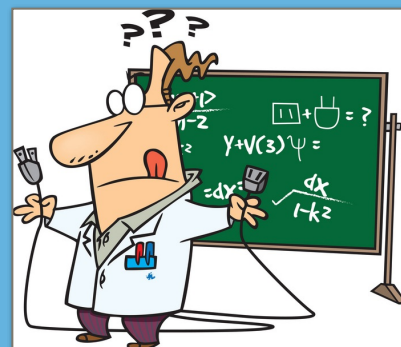
Engagement Councils at www.humanservices.alberta.ca/fcec

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.

Feedback or comments are welcome and can be sent via email to: david.rideout@gov.ab.ca

“The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings.”

~Eric Hoffer



Book Review

by Ruth L. Snyder

Finally, a book for Dads, written by Dads and those they love. These stories are brutally honest about beginnings, joy, fear and anger, admiration, transformation, and transitions involved in parenting children who have disabilities:

"I hate this extra chromosome I can't see, I hate my wife for helping me create this child, I hate You for not answering my prayers, and I hate myself for having to live this unchangeable situation..."

"As delighted and amazed as Charlie was about the 'great' baseball game, it couldn't compete with the delight and pride his father felt about his ability to express himself verbally. It was, as Charlie would say, 'Great!'"

"Taking care of him is what a man is expected to do. So I will man up and do it. Even when it seems impossible."

"We're all fathers. But we're all different... There's no 'right' way to begin the journey of being a father of a child with a disability."

"I hope I have instilled the right attitude and the tools to arm my child to make the better choice for his health and how to deal with people who might not get it."

From the back cover: "This book is for ... anyone interested in the variety of the emotional lives of fathers whose children experience a disability."



A collection of stories from fathers living with children who have disabilities.

Available from Amazon.ca:

-Paperback \$17.29

-Kindle edition \$5.20

www.dadsofdisability.com



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*