

Caregiver Connection

A monthly resource for family caregivers, and foster and adoptive families in Washington state

Everything is Skookum with Skookum Kids

The word “Skookum” is from the Chinook language. It means “strong and healthy.”



Founding Director
Ray Deck, III

The word also could be easily applied to a growing program designed to support kids, foster parents and social workers; it is tucked away in the northwest corner of Washington.

Bellingham’s Skookum Kids is a three-pronged program: a house for kids who have been removed from their birth families that helps with transition before they are placed into foster care; the “Perch and Play,” a cafe and play area for families, where kids play while parents watch, work on computers or read; and a private child-placing agency, Skookum Parents, that licenses and supports foster parents.

“It’s been a whirlwind,” said Volunteer Coordinator Nichole Silva of the growth of Skookum Kids since it opened the transition Skookum House in July 2015. More than 300 kids have stayed at Skookum House since it began.

The house was “designed to solve the 72-hour problem,” explained Ray Deck, III, the program’s founding director.

Kids are removed from their birth homes when Children’s Administration determines it is unsafe for them to remain. Because of the chronic shortage of foster homes, state social workers and placement coordinators often find themselves desperately scrambling to find homes.

Some are staying in hotels or even Children’s Administration offices while homes are sought. Many foster parents are familiar with the calls – sometimes late at night – pleading for them to take children.

Hence, Skookum House and two other similar facilities, one run by Amara in Seattle and Everett’s Hand-In-Hand have started filling a vital need.

Skookum Kids provides a facility where social workers can bring kids who have just entered the foster care system to be housed, fed, played with and cared for while the social worker finds a suitable placement home for them.

Deck, 31, moved to Bellingham from the East Coast. He has a background in education, sales and marketing and came to take a marketing job with a software company. But after a few months, he decided he wanted to do something more.



Nichole Silva and Laura Ann Poehner work with children at Skookum Kids.



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Transforming lives

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

➔ Inside this issue

Everything is Skookum with Skookum Kids	1
Ross Hunter: A New Leader Seeks to Improve Foster Care	3
Giving The Gift of Yourself	5
Merry Christmahanakanika.	6
Making It Easier to Invoice and Pay.	7
Coordinated Care: Healthy Holidays, Flu Shots, Healthy Holiday Eating	8
Save the Dates: Caregivers Conference, We Are Family Day, Camp To Belong.	12
Just For Kids: Gifts From the Heart — From Kids to Parents . .	10
Recall Notices	12
Partners Who Support You	17



“Perch and Play, a Skookum Kids play area where kids and parents have a great time!”

Skookum Kids continued

Through meetings he attended in 2014 in Bellingham, he met a Child Protective Services social worker who told him of the “72-hour problem.” The two of them and others in a “startup team” met every Friday for six months to discuss how to address the problem.

A self-described program-builder, Deck said people told him “we have been struggling with a broken system in this state. I said, ‘I can fix that for you.’ It’s a system that’s harder than it needs to be.”

So began the journey.

Partnering with a nearby church, they found a house and began taking kids. Up to six children can stay for up to 72 hours – or three business days – at Skookum House, which has three bedrooms – one for boys, one for girls and one gender-neutral that siblings might use.

Children sometimes come with only a black garbage bag and few possessions, but they leave with an age- and gender-specific “Go Bag” of items. The house is three stories tall, with a basement chock full of clothes and donated items. Volunteers – they call themselves elves – do laundry, sort clothes and provide the logistical support.

“We want it to feel like Grandma’s house,” Nichole said. And the beauty of it is that the adults can act as grandparents. They have structure and safety, but they are not parents.

The system works for kids, who can ease more gently into the foster care system; for their potential foster parents, who

can take more time than a few minutes to make a crucial decision; and for social workers, who have a welcoming place where children can stay safely and temporarily while they find a more permanent home that is a good match for the child.

“Our hope is that no child from our community would ever be placed in haste,” Deck says on their website, www.skookumkids.org

The downtown “Perch and Play” was being sold, and Skookum scooped it up. The play area includes an interactive climbing wall – one of only five in the United States and the only one on the West Coast. Kids – and they don’t have to be in foster care – can come and play while their parents sit along the perimeter or perch above the play area working on computers. Food is sold there, as well.

Skookum’s child-placing agency was added in 2016. It has 13 licensed homes, eight more in the pipeline and a goal of 200 homes by 2020. It partners with Secret Harbor, headquartered in Burlington, to support foster parents in the Northwest corner of Washington.

Deck and his wife Keely are both foster parents and parents of one biological child. Ray is propelled by his Christian faith to do the work he does, he said.

“My faith is very important to me,” he said. “The Bible says God has a special place in his heart for the fatherless, for the orphan,” he said. He met Nichole



Go Bags, handed out by Skookum Kids when children enter foster care.

Ross Hunter: A New Leader Seeks to Improve Foster Care

Can a former Microsoft executive help build a better foster care system in Washington, much as he helped build the software giant into a worldwide brand?

Fifty-six-year-old Ross Hunter, Secretary of the new Department of Children, Youth and Families, believes he can use his experience and background to help fix the system. Children's Administration will be folded into the department next summer.

"I built stuff," he said of his job rising through the ranks putting together systems to become a Microsoft general manager.

But he has no illusions about how tough it will be to build a new child welfare system.

"There's a lot of systems repair to do," he said of child welfare. "We have a system built to make sure kids stay alive but doesn't make sure they have a chance to succeed."

He recalls going on a ride-along with a Child Protective Services worker, checking a home where one child had been removed because of possible abuse but two others remained. The CPS worker concluded they were safe, but Hunter said, "I think if I came back in a year, those children would not have progressed. Kids need a lot of services." He fears children like that will end up in "the pipeline of despair," many of them landing in prison.

"I wake up every day and I see those two kids," he said. "How can we give them the services they need to succeed?" Many factors contribute to the crisis in the system, not the least of which is the increased number of kids who need safety and security outside their birth homes, he said.

"There's been a 10 percent increase in (kids coming into foster care) in the past two years," Hunter said. "That makes

all sorts of things break," he said. "More kids are more traumatized in the system." And, he said, "Foster parents aren't able to deal with the kids" who come into their homes. "They blow out and we get sort of this bad spiral."

"I wake up every day and I see those two kids," he said. "How can we give them the services they need to succeed?"

He has ideas about how to start making improvements, bringing his unique background and experience to the new job. A Yale graduate with a bachelor's degree in computer science, Hunter was recruited by Microsoft in the early 1980s and worked there for 17 years.

He was able to financially retire at age 40. But retirement did not suit him or his family, he said.

"I married my wife for life, but not for lunch," he laughed.

He grew restless for new activities, throwing himself into various causes such as school levies until the political bug bit him. He ran successfully as a Democrat in a Redmond/Kirkland-area legislative district that had been solidly Republican and rose to become chair of the state legislature's House Appropriations Committee. He was a key figure in guiding the state through the recession that began in 2008 – a period and experience he describes as "terrifying."

He regrets budget cuts made to such areas as mental health and children's programs, but also said there was no easy choices.



Ross Hunter,
Secretary of the
new Department of
Children, Youth and
Families (DCYF)

He added, "I don't think we have fully recovered from that."

So what to do about fixing the system?

He left the Washington Legislature in 2015 when Gov. Jay Inslee appointed him to head the Department of Early Learning. He was then tapped by Inslee to head this new department, a stand-alone agency that replaces Children's Administration, which has been part of the State's Department of Social and Health Services.

"I know how to manage," he said. And his work in early childhood education gives him a focus on prevention as a top priority in his new job.

"We want to prevent as many people as possible from entering the system" by focusing on the well-being of the child above and beyond the mission to keep them safe and secure, he said.

"Making investments in prevention" is the path he wants the department to travel. "Start with scratch with all the science (using) preventative analytics" to guide services strategies that help kids from coming into the foster care system.

For example, he said, "micro-target at the neighborhood level ... where there is a lot of neighborhood trauma. Flood (a neighborhood) with services."

When children *do* have to enter care, he has three major values to bring in helping them.

"I will have a relentless focus on measureable outcomes for children," he said of the first.

Ross Hunter continued

Among steps that can be taken to improve outcomes is automating some of the more routine tasks so social workers can focus on the job of helping kids. He thinks some automation can start right at the beginning. Automating more of the process to help potential foster parents get started along the road to licensing.

Second, “We will be transparent in everything we do.”

As one of his first steps, he said he will make both his telephone number and email address public so foster parents and others can reach him.



“I can manage that,” he said. “I may be inundated, but I’d rather be inundated than not hear from foster parents at all.”

He also plans to travel the state talking to those who work in the system and those who are affected by it. The day before he was interviewed for this story, for instance, he was already pursuing that goal and had met with a large number of administrative support staff in Children’s Administration.

A third high priority is treating all those in the system with respect.

A perceived lack of respect has been an issue raised by foster parents for decades. Change in the agency’s culture is needed to make them feel like valued members of a team working for the best interests of children.

He noted that treating foster parents respectfully is also the best way to

generate good “word of mouth” – the best recruiting tool and the best way to retain foster parents. “We are bleeding (foster parents) because they are unhappy,” he said.

He added: “It’s always cheaper to hold on to those people you have than to bring in new ones.” That can be accomplished by building a culture where foster parents get their phone calls returned and receive updated information about the children in their care. That is just part of what respect looks like, he said.

Hunter says he will work to create that respect among all people in the system –and he plans to model the behavior by being respectful himself. That’s the way to change the culture, he said.

“You can’t just change culture by saying, ‘I’m going to change culture,’” he said. You have to change behavior.”

Skookum Kids continued

the orphan,” he said. He met Nichole while attending a Christian college and she followed him west to work in the program.

Deck said when he and Keely were contemplating marriage, “I told her I was going to be a foster parent – that came with the territory.”

He and those who work for Skookum Kids – the staff has grown since July 2015 from one half-time to seven full-time employees and more than 100 volunteers now – believe strongly in the power of support and respect of foster parents so they can better care for children.

“People respond to being respected and supported,” Deck says.

Through Skookum Parents, as many supports as possible are being built in. Once licensed, foster parents receive

one-on-one support with case managers, support groups and free family events. A Foster Parents Night Out once a month is provided for their foster parents, who can leave their kids in capable hands and go enjoy themselves for an evening. Each month, Skookum Kids selects one foster parent or couple nominated by community members to receive complementary family portraits and an all-expenses-paid date with childcare by trained volunteers.

The community has provided great support for the program. Deck is always promoting it throughout the community. The climbing wall, for example, was paid for through a grant from First Federal Savings and Loan in Bellingham.

“Ray just has the ability to talk about it that just gets people on it,” said Laura Ann Poehner, public relations specialist

for Skookum Kids. “He can talk about bringing safe adults into a child’s life.”

Though much has been done, Ray said much more needs to be done to continue making system improvements.

He is developing the kinds of evidence-based data that shows empirically that Skookum’s program works. He then hopes it can expand across the state or beyond.

“We want to expand the approach to other communities in a similar situation to what we are,” he said. “I take great pride in being an opponent of those who defend the status quo.”

For further information:
www.skookumkids.org

Giving The Gift of Yourself

By Bob Partlow, Working Santa and former foster parent

At this time of the year for adults, the best gift under the tree on Christmas morning, is the gift of children.

That is true for all adults who care for and about children.

But it is especially true for those adults in our world who try every day to create new paths for children, whose young life journeys have already been more dreadful than most of us can imagine.

But what about these children? What is the best gift they would like that morning?

Ask them, and they likely would name one or more of the many gifts they see on advertisements that saturate our airwaves, clog our mailboxes and fill our social media sites – permeating our culture. As a Santa, I hear those requests all the time.

What they likely would not name is the one gift we adults can and do give to them every day – the gift of ourselves. Ours is the gift of a stable, secure and nurturing home, a safe garden where can be planted the seeds of a new and better life.

We can help raise the kind of children like the little boy who told Santa he had all he needed and the gift he was going to receive from Santa should go to someone

else. Or the little girl who wanted Santa to end childhood hunger. Those are the kinds of children we want to raise.

The word “hero” is tossed around a lot now – almost to the point of losing any real meaning.

It is mostly applied to those who put their lives ahead of others – often directly in harm’s way. And they are to be commended and thanked for the service they provide for all of us who inhabit this earth. We are all better and safer because of their devotion to duty or their selfless sacrifices.

But there are many others who, quietly, day by day, put the lives of others ahead of their own, especially those who volunteer as foster parents, those who adopt children into their homes and hearts, and those who are relatives and take over raising children when someone in their family is unable to do so.

And there are many more who labor in those unseen corners of the vineyards of child welfare as social workers or in the many other public and private jobs seeking nothing more than the opportunity to help improve the lives of children.

If we are naming heroes, if we are commending and thanking people for their service, certainly those who serve in the service of children should be included. Giving back compassionately, propelled by a mission statement tattooed on their hearts, they work to better young lives every single day.

Not everyone celebrates Christmas, of course. But we can all celebrate the spirit of the season, a season when we focus on our families, particularly the youngest among us to whom we give the gift of ourselves to help heal them and hopefully to nurture in them the gift of giving back. I have seen that gift come back countless times.

The late Gov. Mike Lowry once said, “Take care of the children and they will take care of the future.”

To all who embrace that sentiment in their hearts and with their lives, we say thank you.

Because of what you do every day, all of us at this time of year can hold onto the faith that the future will be in good hands.

And that is heroic.

Merry Christmahanakanika

By Marianne K. Ozmun-Wells, Former Diversity Policy Manager, DSHS Office of Diversity and Inclusion



Editor's note: This story originally appeared in the December 2014 Caregiver Connection, and will be new to many of you who recently began receiving the newsletter; for longtime readers, we hope it's a welcome reprise the many cultures embraced around us during the holiday season.

Photo Courtesy Marianne Ozmun-Wells

For those of us with deeply held faith convictions, those of us who believe strongly in the absence of any supreme being and those of us who really want to honor the beliefs and ideologies of others while embracing our own convictions, the winter holidays can be a social minefield. Public schools have responded to holiday diversity in the school system by making all of the holidays culture-less.

What most of us grew up experiencing as Christmas break is now winter break and other observances have simply been eradicated altogether. Halloween is now some combination of multi-colored leaves and apples, lots of apples.

Some of us have experienced that pendulum swing of indignant adherence to our personal "reason for the season" as being the ONLY reason for the season and the rest of the world is just blind to wanting to be more tolerant but feeling like it's just too darned complicated.

So what is an intentional, appropriate approach to recognizing different faiths and cultures during the winter holidays? How do we bridge that gap between the Christmas Trees and Menorahs and Kinaras and Yule Logs and the universal symbol for evolution?

Pretending that we are in a faith and culture vacuum does not work. When we eliminate all vestiges of history, culture, values, and beliefs from holiday seasons we risk losing the lessons these holidays have to teach us. Moreover, the way we test our own beliefs and strengthen our own values is by allowing them to be challenged. It's easy to be moral and kind and even pious in the absence of difference.

When we meet difference with not merely tolerance but true acceptance and listen to learn from others rather than listening to judge, we are modeling the greatest charge of most major philosophies and faith systems which is kindness.

There are ways to stay true to our own beliefs while honoring the differences in beliefs among our family members and friends, neighbors and colleagues, and the children we serve.

The first thing is to not assume that our belief is the only right belief or that everyone shares our belief. This is tough because the phrase "Merry Christmas" is so engrained into cultural discourse that some think others rude if we don't exchange this pleasantries from the day after Thanksgiving until Christmas. The thing is, there are those who have deeply, deeply, held faith convictions who do

not celebrate Christmas and others for whom science and reason and our own humanity are the forces behind our existence and purpose.

For Humanists, the compulsion to be kind and generous is internally driven rather than celestially required, and the kindness extended is its own reward.

For some Christians, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, this practice of elevating a certain day of the year as a day above others to be generous is challenging because they are required by their beliefs to be kind all year.

For Jews, whose history, faith, and culture predate Christianity by about 2,000 years, there are many holy days, some of which are during the winter months but a simple "Merry Christmas" presumes that all people believe the same, practice the same and celebrate the same. Nothing could be further from the truth, and broad differences in ways of thinking, seeing, and believing are part of our national strength, not weakness. Most of us are simply being gracious and mean absolutely no harm when we say, "Merry Christmas." Some of us are annoyed when reduced to saying "Happy Holidays." Still others say nothing for fear of being "politically incorrect." What

How hard is it really to extend the conversation by two minutes to show real interest in another human and then to say, “Oh, Happy Hanukkah!” Or, Happy...Solstice, or Potlatch, or Ramadan, or Diwali, or Kwanzaa, or Tuesday.” What about a simple Happy Tuesday? If that 14-year-old in our home came from a belief system contrary to our own, what value is there in trying to convince him of the wrongness of his history and his identity?

if we could just take one or two minutes more to find a connection rather than get irritated and more strongly reinforce a difference?

Instead of automatically defaulting to “Merry Christmas” (it’s a hard habit to break,) what if we said something like, “do you and your family celebrate winter holidays? If the answer is, “Oh yes, we have a big Christmas celebration.” Then we can, “Merry Christmas” to our heart’s content. But if the answer is, “Oh we do a little Hanukkah celebration for the kids,” or, “Our big celebration is Ramadan,” or, “We will go to a huge potlatch, “or, “Actually, we celebrate Solstice,” or, “Not really, we don’t do holidays.” What if we just honor their honest and brave responses without judgment, without feeling compelled to debate or persuade or in any way change the other.

Would it not be better to model the strengths of our own credo by honoring his right to believe as he wishes, reminding him that he is worthwhile and valued, and then walking in the love and kindness of our own beliefs? That will be the greatest testament to our beliefs that he will likely ever experience.

The winter holidays (and Tuesdays) are already upon us. Let’s challenge ourselves to walk in the spirit and intent of our respective ideologies. Almost all of them make mention of love and kindness toward others. Let’s pause for just a moment to recall that there may be a gap between our beliefs and those of the people around us and that kindness is the bridge.

Oh, and Happy Tuesday!

Making It Easier to Submit Invoices and Receiving Payment

Foster parents will now find it much easier to submit invoices and receive reimbursement for children in their care.

By Dec. 18, all foster parents and relatives with state-dependent children can submit their monthly invoices electronically and have access to all payment information. All caregivers are being sent letters explaining how to access the new system.

The new electronic invoicing system has been tested by users, who have given it good reviews, according to those putting together the system.

Not only can caregivers avoid calling or submitting paper copies of invoices, they can access information about their

payment history and find when their monthly payment for respite, mileage, child care and sibling visits have been paid.

If you have not yet received a letter explaining how to access the Secure Washington Social Service Payment Portal, you will have one by Dec. 18.

In addition, about two-thirds of foster parents still have their check sent to them by mail. They must wait for the check, when it could be easily deposited for them. Those who work on the Secure Washington Social Service Payment System encourage caregivers to use direct deposit.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

The Listserv Children’s Administration has used for 10 years to deliver the monthly Caregiver Connection and other important messaging to nearly 9,000 foster parents, kinship caregivers, adoptive families, social work staff, Child Placing Agencies and interested community partners, will be discontinued in mid-December. However a new mail service, Mail Chimp, will soon be carrying the messages from Children’s Administration.

If you currently receive the FOSTERPARENTS@LISTSERV.WA.GOV mailings from Waterhouse, Meri (DSHS/CA) you will be automatically entered into our new Mail Chimp Service. Prospective foster parents will be able to subscribe and newly licensed foster parents will be added as their licenses are issued. Subscribers will be able to Unsubscribe easily when they decide the material is no longer needed. This change will allow us to build more accurate messaging to regional areas and also to target and send messages directly to specific groups of caregivers, (i.e. kinship caregivers separate from licensed foster parents, etc.). The new Mail Chimp service will allow us to improve our information messaging to caregivers, so you receive important information quickly.

Coordinated Care: We've Got You Covered

👉 Holiday Hours

Coordinated Care will be closed the afternoon of Friday, Dec. 22, and all day Monday, Dec. 25, in observance of the Christmas holiday. It also will be closed the afternoon of Friday, Dec. 29, in observance of New Year's Eve. Our 24/7 Nurse Advice Line is always available for health-related questions and concerns for Apple Health Core Connections members:

1-844-354-9876 (TTY/TDD: 711).

👉 Coping with Holiday Stress

The holidays can be stressful. For a child or youth in foster care, renewed feelings of grief and loss can make things more difficult. School schedules change. Holiday events clutter the calendar.

Add in memories of past holidays and it can be overwhelming. If you're trying to help children in your home cope with holiday stress, join us for a webinar. The Coordinated Care Community Education team offers two sessions of our Coping with Holiday Stress training in December. We'll talk about why this is a challenging time, and ways to help guide children through the season.

Register now!

If you need help accessing and/or coordinating any behavioral health service for your child, please call Apple Health Core Connections Member Services 1-844- 354-9876.

Winter Fun That's Healthy, Too

Don't let the cold keep you and the kids from being active.

There are many ways to stay fit during the winter months. Here are some ideas to keep your family on the move:

- ➔ Go geocaching: This is a free and fun activity for all.
- ➔ Take the stairs: Add exercise without thinking about it by taking the stairs instead of the escalator.
- ➔ Exercise while gaming: Too cold to go outside and play? Try the Nintendo Wii's tennis game and compete with the kids. Other video games that boost the heart rate include: Dance Revolution, Wipeout, Zumba and Wii Sports.
- ➔ Get creative indoors: Try a game of tag or try an active game of Simon Says. Keep your kids moving indoors, but remember to move furniture out of the way.
- ➔ Have a snowball fight: Is there snow in your area? Get out and enjoy it. Make a snowman or build a fort!

Tips for Healthy Holiday Eating

Feed your children, and yourself, a light meal or snack before going to a holiday party. It's easy to overeat when you're hungry.

- ➔ Set a good example for kids by eating fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- ➔ Sodas and other sweet drinks contain a lot of calories and many contain caffeine. For a healthier "soda," mix 100 percent fruit juice with club soda or seltzer water.
- ➔ Teach your children to eat smaller portions of food, especially at a buffet, where they may want to try everything.
- ➔ The holiday season can keep you extra busy. Avoid fast food. It may be handy, but is often high in fat and low in nutrition.



Photo by Eaters Collective on Unsplash

Coordinated Care: We've Got You Covered

Get Those Flu Shots

Coordinated Care Knows the Flu is No Fun.

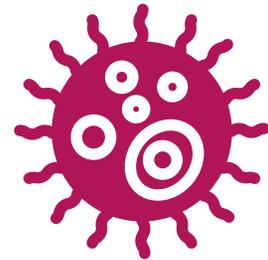
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children should get a flu shot every year for the best protection against the flu. Influenza (the flu) is more dangerous than the common cold for children.

Each year, millions of children get sick with seasonal influenza and thousands are hospitalized. It is not too late to get the flu shot for this flu season. Coordinated Care covers the flu shot at no cost. You can always get a flu shot from your primary care doctor, too. Children 7 and older can get the flu shot at a participating pharmacy.

Need help finding a place to get the flu shot? Call Apple Health Core Connections 1-844-354-9876 (TDD/TTY: 711).

Not sure what symptoms could mean it's the flu? Here's a list of things to look for: Fever, headache; feeling tired; dry cough and/or sore throat; runny nose; muscle aches. Vomiting and diarrhea also can occur and are more common in kids than adults with the flu.

For more information and next steps, visit the Coordinated Care Krames Health Library. As always, you can call our 24/7 Nurse Advice Line anytime for health-related questions and concerns: 1-844-354-9876 (TTY/TDD: 711).



Heartfelt and Homemade Holiday Gift Ideas

Buying gifts can add up quick, but kids may want to get in on the giving part of the holiday spirit. Save money by making gifts from items in your own home. Consider encouraging kids to make gifts for siblings or parents they are separated from. Check out these crafts for the perfect gift this year! Popsicle stick frames, sugar scrubs, tea cup candles, send-a-hug, candy sleighs, tie-dye bookmarks, homemade fridge magnets.

(See another great idea in the Just For Kids column on the following pages.)

Heartfelt Gifts: From Our Children to Their Parents

By Deanna Partlow

With the holidays coming soon and kids in a state of perpetual excitement, it's hard to sort out just what projects to do that will keep young hands and minds busy. And as we all know, Christmas is an especially hard time emotionally for the children we care for, separated as they are from their birth parents.

One thing you can do that will help bring comfort and joy is to help children make or assemble a personal gift for his or her mom and/or dad. It doesn't need to be expensive or fancy. At the receiving end, there's a bio that probably will treasure these gifts.

Of course, the first thing that comes to mind is a photo, but that doesn't really help a child feel he or she has done something special for the parent. Baking together and wrapping up some holiday cookies or quick bread is always a thoughtful way a child can give something of themselves to their parents. Here are a couple quick ideas to either make or assemble.

No-bake gingerbread salt dough ornaments – the sweet smell of Christmas!

YOU'LL NEED: Flour, baking spices, salt, a mixing bowl, waxed paper, ribbon or string – also acrylic paints, if your children want to paint them after they dry. Cookie cutters are optional, but so much fun. The recipe can be doubled for more kids.

- Mix the no-bake salt dough:
- 1 cup flour
- 1/3 cup gingerbread spice (cinnamon, with some ground ginger, nutmeg and cloves added – or just use all cinnamon)
- 1/2 cup salt
- 3/4 cup hot water (not boiling – you should be able to stick your finger into it)

Mix the dry ingredients in the bowl, then add the hot water, mixing until the dough is formed. I needed to add more flour to make it non-sticky and stiff enough to work with – flour varies. If you need more, add it a tablespoonful at a time until you can easily handle it. On waxed paper, knead the dough into a smooth ball.

MAKE THE ORNAMENT: Use a clean sheet of waxed paper and sprinkle it with flour. Help the child roll out about half the dough using a rolling pin or a soup can until it's about 1/3-inch thick. (It needs to be a circle larger than the child's hand.) Next, help the child press his or her hand into the dough to make an imprint. You may need to push their pinkie and thumb down slightly to make a good one. Leaving about a half-inch space around the handprint, cut around the edge if necessary to get rid of any ragged edges. At the ornament's top, make a hole using the end of a straw so that a string hanger can be added when the ornament dries.



The cut-off pieces can now be kneaded into the remaining dough and rolled out to make a few extra cut-out ornaments for your own tree or for friends' gifts. Again, use waxed paper and sprinkle it with a little flour

Leave the ornaments on the waxed paper and let them dry. It took mine a couple days to thoroughly dry. Paint or decorate if desired. Have the child add his or her name, along with the date, on the back. Finally, add the string or ribbon to them.



Love in a jar ... or whatever

So you're not crafty or you've ran out of time ... fill a container and trim with some ribbon and decorations, instead. All you need is a container and some small gift items. The main point is to do it with the child or children in your care.

TO BEGIN: Pick a theme. Does the bio mom love chocolate or like crossword puzzles? Is dad into coffee or woodworking? Narrow the gift idea down to one theme with the child, and set a money limit for the gift.

Then round up the posse for a shopping expedition!

First, choose a container: Mason jar, water bottle, kitchen storage jar, a funny Christmas mug, a baking pan, a plastic bucket or a flower pot are just some of the options.

Next, find small gift items that will fit inside the container and will carry out the theme. It's helpful to have the container with you so you can make sure the items fit, especially if you're using a canning jar or water bottle. Pick out a few items. For instance, a coffee lover might get a couple small bottles of flavorings and small packets of holiday cookies or biscotti. A movie lover might get a DVD, favorite candy and popcorn packets or a flavored popcorn salt.

Kids always have plenty of ideas. And you can keep it easy if you need to. Who wouldn't like a clear glass jar filled with

M&Ms or salted peanuts? And if you have enough money, you could stick in a gift card to a favorite coffee place, movie theater or restaurant.

When you arrive home, place some brightly colored tissue or paper shreds in the bottom of the container, especially if it is see-through. Help the child arrange all the goodies inside, then either wrap the container in cellophane like a basket gift or use wrapping paper. Finally, add a ribbon or other decorations.

And don't forget that new photo and maybe a handmade Christmas card from the kids. If your child won't be seeing a parent at Christmas, ask your social worker if he or she can deliver these special gifts.



Gingerbread salt dough ornaments!
Mmmmm – the smell of Christmas!



A container gift: price about \$12. I used a kitchen storage jar for a pampering kit. Inside: bath salts, soothing socks, scented aloe hand cream, a scented votive candle and a couple other items.

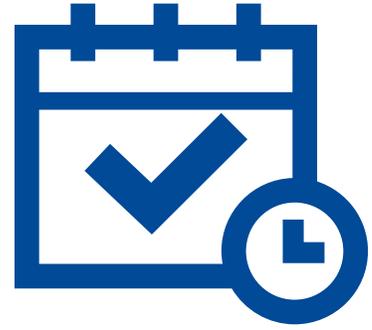
Save the Date

Mark your calendars for the following events happening next spring.

The Pacific Northwest Caregiver's Conference, May 4-6 at Great Wolf Lodge at Grand Mound, south of Olympia. Information: www.fpaws.org

We Are Family Day, Sunday, May 20, at Safeco Field in Seattle. Discounted tickets to the Mariners game with the Detroit Tigers and a pre-game activity are part of the event. For the last two years more than 3000 people have attended We Are Family to celebrate and recognize our caregivers – plan to join us at Safeco Field on May 20, 2018. Watch for more information in the Caregiver Connection

Camp To Belong Washington, June 25-30, that reunites siblings ages 8-18 who are separated from each other due to foster, relative or adoptive care. If you are caring for separated siblings or have some on your caseload, get more information about camp at www.camptobelongwa.org. Camp leaders are seeking counselor and other volunteers. See the website for more information.



Important Recall Notices Issued

Three safety recall notices affecting children have been issued by the federal Consumer Products Safety Commission.

The 134 models of **Kidde fire extinguishers**, manufactured between Jan. 1, 1973, and Aug. 5, 2017, can become clogged or require excessive force to discharge and can fail to activate during a fire or emergency. The nozzle can also discharge with enough force to cause a hazard. Replacement is recommended; no proof of purchase is required.

For more information, call 855-271-0733 or click on www.kiddie.com and click on "Product Safety Recall."

Fisher-Price Infant Motion Seats have been recalled due to a fire hazard. Model numbers are CMR35, CMR36, CMR37 and DHY. They were sold at various outlets and on Amazon.com between November 2015 and October 2017.

Consumers should immediately stop using the seats and contact Fisher-Price for a full refund: 800-432-5437 or www.service.mattel.com and click on "Recalls and Safety Alerts."

Plan Toys Baby Gyms have been recalled due to a strangulation hazard. Consumers should immediately stop using the gyms and contact Plan Toys at Michael@plantoysinc.com –

Or go to www.PlanToys.com and click on "Safety."



Caregiver Training from the Alliance

Explore our wide variety of caregiver training options designed to increase understanding and strengthen skills. These upcoming in-person classroom sessions provide in-depth information on relevant topics for the caregiver community at convenient locations across the state.

Trainings offered in Region 1: Eastern Washington

December [LEARN MORE](#)

- Emotion Coaching
- Introduction to Adoption from Foster Care
- Paper Trail: Documentation Training for Caregivers
- So You Have a New Placement...Now What?

January [LEARN MORE](#)

- Compassionate Parenting
- DLR/CPS Allegations: An Overview of the Investigation Process for Caregivers
- How You Can Become an Effective Educational Advocate for Your Child
- Identifying and Supporting Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) for Caregivers
- Introduction to Adoption from Foster Care
- Introduction to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) for Caregivers
- Kinship 101: Information for Relatives and Suitable Others
- So You Have a New Placement...Now What?
- Talking with Children About Race

Caregiver Training from the Alliance continued

**Trainings offered in Region 2:
I-5 corridor north of Seattle to Whatcom County**

December  **LEARN MORE**

- Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma
- Infant Safety and Care (for Caregivers)
- Introduction to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) for Caregivers
- Paper Trail: Documentation Training for Caregivers
- Why Children Lie

January  **LEARN MORE**

- Behavior Management Tools for Foster Parents and Caregivers
- Caregiving for Children with Physically Aggressive Behavior Concerns (Formerly Physically Aggressive Youth)
- Caregiving for Children with Sexual Behavior Concerns (Formerly Sexually Aggressive Youth)
- DLR/CPS Investigations: An Overview of the Investigation Process for Caregivers
- Eating Disorders and Beyond
- Fostering Children and Youth Through Transition, Grief, and Loss: Helping Children With Their Feelings
- How You Can Become An Effective Educational Advocate for Your Child
- Introduction to Adoption from Foster Care
- Kinship 101: Information for Relatives and Suitable Others
- Minimizing the Risk of Allegations
- Paper Trail: Documentation Training for Caregivers
- Talking with Children About Race
- Why Children Lie

Caregiver Training from the Alliance continued

Trainings in Region 3: Olympic Peninsula and I-5 corridor south of Seattle, (including Tacoma)

December [LEARN MORE](#)

- Caregiving for Children with Sexual Behavior Concerns (formerly Sexually Aggressive Youth)
- DLR/CPS Allegations: An Overview of the Investigative Process for Caregivers
- Identifying and Supporting Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) for Caregivers
- Infant Safety and Care (for Caregivers)
- Introduction to Adoption from Foster Care
- Introduction to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) for Caregivers
- Introduction to Positive Discipline
- Kinship 101: Information for Relatives and Suitable Others
- So You Have a New Placement...Now What?

January [LEARN MORE](#)

- Bullying: Prevention and Intervention
- Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A Workshop for Resource Parents from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- Chaos to Calm: Promoting Attachment in Out-of-Home Care
- Compassionate Parenting
- Identifying and Supporting Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) for Caregivers
- Introduction to Adoption from Foster Care
- Introduction to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) for Caregivers
- Resilience Trumps Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)
- So You Have a New Placement...Now What?

Your Child Welfare Training Team for Region 1

Eastern Washington

Jan Hinkle	509-836-5499	Janh5@uw.edu (Manager)
Renee Siers	509-363-3399	siersr@uw.edu
Patty Orona	509-834-8535	po5@uw.edu
Ryan Krueger	509-660-0350	krry300@uw.edu
Sherry Colomb	509-322-2552	scolomb1@uw.edu

Join us on Social Media for inspiration, tips, trainings, the latest events and to be part of a caregiver community



Your Child Welfare Training Team for Region 2

King County and North to Whatcom County and Island County

Yolonda Marzest.	206-923-4955	ymarzest@uw.edu (Manager)
Joan Sager	360-594-6744	sagerj2@uw.edu
Cara Mbaye	206-923-4914	mbayec@uw.edu
El-Freda Stephenson . . .	206-923-4922	elfreda@uw.edu

Your Child Welfare Training Team for Region 3

Pierce County & South to Clark County plus the Olympic Peninsula & Coast

Arthur Fernandez	206-276-4549	sart300@uw.edu (Manager)
Penny Michel	360-725-6788	mpen300@uw.edu
Stephanie Rodrigues . . .	206-321-1721	steph75@uw.edu
Robert Judd	360-344-3003	juddre@uw.edu
Gracia Hahn	253-983-6362	hahng@uw.edu

Your Registration Help Desk

Registration Help. . . . 866-577-1915 help@acwe.on.spiceworks.com

Meet Our Recruitment Partners Who Support You



Olive Crest's Fostering Together program supports the west side of the state (Regions 2 and 3) through foster care Liaisons.

Eastern Washington University's Fostering Washington program supports (Region 1) the east side of the state through Resource Peer Mentors (RPMs),

Children's Administration (CA) works in partnership with two separate agencies to provide foster parent recruitment and retention / support services to prospective foster parents, current foster parents and relative caregivers in all areas of Washington. Our goals are to:

- Increase the numbers of safe, quality foster families to meet the diverse needs of children and youth placed in out-of-home care in Washington State, and
- Offer support to foster parents and relative caregivers

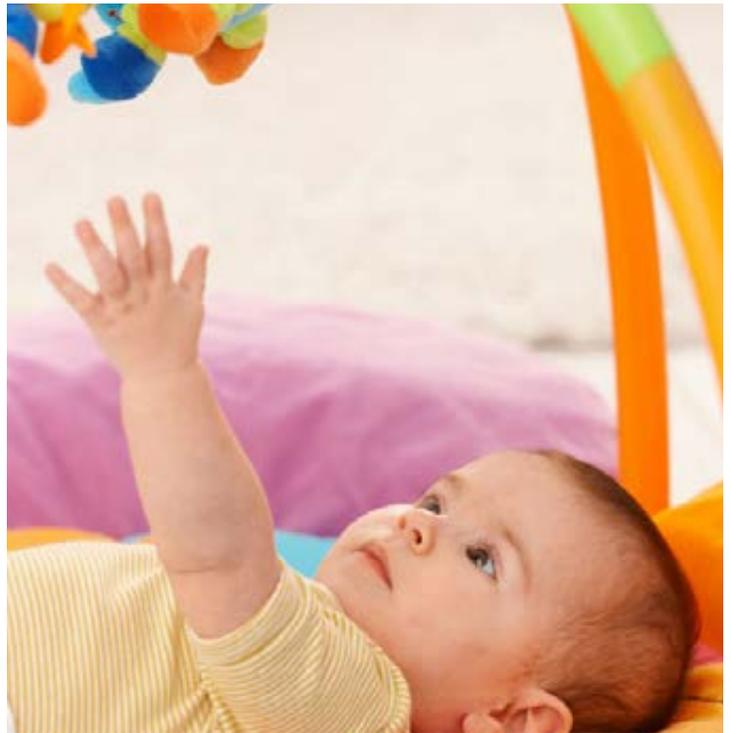
Prospective foster parents are welcome to license through either CA's Division of Licensed Resources (DLR), or any private child placing agency licensed in Washington. Our recruitment partners serve all families, regardless of where they choose to become licensed. Prospective foster parents are welcome to license through either CA's Division of Licensed Resources (DLR), or any private child placing agency licensed in Washington. Our recruitment partners serve all families, regardless of where they choose to become licensed.

The Liaisons or RPMs provide information, help and guidance for you from your first inquiry, through training, and throughout the licensing process to become foster parents. Liaisons and RPMs both answer questions and share helpful information during your foster care journey. They offer:

- Support at your first placement,
- Support groups , (some with training hours available and some provide a meal and / or child care)
- Mentoring,
- Training, and
- On-line Facebook groups

All supports are designed with our caregivers in mind.

We want to help you connect with other caregivers, obtain additional training, and find answers to questions. Both Olive Crest and Eastern Washington University offer information and referral services to foster parents and relative caregivers. The regional liaisons or peer mentors also help resolve issues foster parents may experience in their local area. Contact the liaison or RPM listed for your area with any questions you might have.



Eastern Washington University Fostering Washington



Position/ Area Covered	Name	E-mail	Phone
Director All Counties	Kim Fordham	kfordham@ewu.edu	(208)-659-7401
Associate Director All Counties	Mon Ra' Muse	mmuse@ewu.edu	(509) 359-0791
Recruitment Coordinator Ferry, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens Counties	Amber Sherman	asherman4@ewu.edu	(509) 359-0874
Recruitment Coordinator Benton, Franklin, Yakima Kittitas, Klickitat, Counties	Tyann Whitworth	twhitworth@ewu.edu	(509) 731-2060
Recruitment Coordinator Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla, Whitman Counties	Katie Stinson	mstinson2@ewu.edu	(208) 699-8419
Recruitment Coordinator Adams, Chelan, Grant, Douglas, Okanogan	Hayley Stoebner	hstoebner@ewu.edu	(509) 322-1191
FIRST Program Mngr. All Counties	Dru Powers	Dpowers8@ewu.edu	(509) 928-6697

Fostering Washington's website www.ewu.edu/css/fostering-washington can help you locate your local foster parent Resource Peer Mentor (RPM) from the county map on their website.

Click on: → *County where you live*

Olive Crest's Fostering Together: 1-866-958-KIDS (5437)



Position	Name	E-mail	Phone
Shala Crow	Program Director	(360) 220-3785	Shala-Crow@olivecrest.org
Leeann Marshel	Critical Support	(855) 395-7990	Leeann-Marshel@olivecrest.org
Patrice Vansligtenhorst	Program Coordinator	(425) 462-1612 x 1308	Patrice-Vansligtenhorst@olivecrest.org
Megan Harp	FIRST Coordinator	(425) 350-3839	Megan-Harp@olivecrest.org

Fostering Together's website fosteringtogether.org can help you locate your local foster parent liaison.

Click on: → *Region where you live* → *Find Your Liaison*