



Quarterly Newsletter

ISSUE NO 13 | January 2024



Another year has flown by and we are overwhelmed with gratitude for our families who have gone above and beyond this year to care for children in so many ways, big and small. Many of you have taken on extra children, older youth, youth who would have otherwise been sleeping in an office, provided respite or meals for other families, and so much more. Kentucky's foster parents are truly a remarkable village that we are proud of.

Many of us start off the year with New Year's resolutions or goals. My family started the year off with goals and setting weekly tasks for how we would meet those goals. If you are a New Year's resolution type of person but haven't thought of your big goals for the year, let me provide some thought. There are over 8,000 children in out-of-home care in Kentucky. Although we have amazing foster and adoptive parents, the need is just not met. Foster and adoptive parents with lived experience, like you, are proven to be the best way to encourage others to learn more about fostering. So when you are setting your goals for the year, I urge you to think about ways you can share your experiences with others and encourage others to learn how they could get involved with fostering, adopting or respite care.

I wish you the best start of the year and hope you enjoy this issue of the FosterKY Newsletter!

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Jayden (8/2011), aka JJ, is an active boy. JJ's favorite things are the colors red and blue and Spiderman. If he had all the money in the world, he would like to buy a Lamborghini. He likes swimming, basketball, being around people, and dancing. He wants everyone to know that he dislikes: Ramon noodles, Brussels Sprouts, hot wings, and eye contact. JJ wants a family that will care for him, love him, and keep him safe.

Watch Jayden's Video at <https://americaskidsbelong.org/project/jayden-f0197/>

Sasha (11/2006) is a quiet by nature teen girl. She has excellent social skills and is typically very polite with others. Sasha prefers having choices and being able to be independent. She is very smart and resilient. Sasha is always willing to share input about what she needs and ways that could empower her more to accomplish her goals.

Sasha is artistic and enjoys doing arts and crafts activities. She likes to swim, listen to music, and participate in some sports. Sasha loves animals, especially dogs and horses.

Sasha enjoys spending time with her peers. She believes in the importance of family and being loyal to those she cares about, whether family, friends, or teammates.

Learn more at [Child Profile - AdoptUSKids](#)



This handsome young man is Michael Isaiah (11/2009). He prefers to use his middle name. Isaiah is a very likeable youth who has a great sense of humor and is a good conversationalist. He chooses to see the glass half full and handle life in a positive way.

In his free time, Isaiah loves to play video games. He also enjoys putting together Lego's and is very capable of putting together entire sets in a very short time. Isaiah also loves to be outdoors, go outside, playing, and taking bicycle rides.

Watch Isaiah's video at <https://americaskidsbelong.org/project/michael-8/>

Janelle (5/2009) has just started high school this year and is looking forward to her journey through school as a high schooler. Janelle enjoys typical teenage activities such as spending time with friends and hanging out with them. She has her own phone and likes talking to her friends. She likes going to new places and being adventurous. She loves shopping for shoes and clothes, but not so much for household supplies. She takes care in her appearance. Janelle spends a lot of her time fixing her hair and trying out new hair styles. She doesn't currently play for any organized sports team, but would like the opportunity to play basketball. Janelle is in good mental and physical health with no ongoing issues of any type. She tends to get along better with peers and siblings her own age or older. She has a strong sense of what's fair and what's not and will advocate for herself if she feels she's not being treated fairly. She would like a family who treats all their kids the same way- and doesn't show preferential treatment to their biological children over their foster children. She would like a family that likes to do fun things- such as go to events or try new things. She would really like to go on a fun vacation. Like most kids- when she's out of school on break she enjoys sleeping in! Christmas and Halloween are her favorite holidays. At Christmas she likes to open presents and spend time with family. For Halloween she likes to eat her favorite candy- Reese's cups and watch horror movies. Janelle is mostly self-sufficient. She cleans her own bedroom and does her own laundry. She has also helped with other chores such as sweeping and mopping, doing dishes, dusting, vacuuming, and picking up after herself. She likes to be around people with good personalities, who like to joke around. When asked what she would choose with three wishes she said be with an awesome family, hang out with her friends whenever she wants, and to be successful in life. If you'd like to get to know a great kiddo- then Janelle is for you!

Watch Janelle's video at <https://americaskidsbelong.org/project/janelle-nellie-f0353/>



Regional Happenings

Two Rivers hosted their first Night of Encouragement with guest speaker, Jason Johnson. R&C staff, Fonda Walker, and the Network team. They did a fabulous job organizing this event. This special night celebrated foster and adoptive families and encourages others who are interested to take the next step. 120 families attended the event. "The community support, the dinners like this, people willing to just pour into you because it takes a lot out of you to be a foster parent, you're pouring out of yourself every day," said Magen Mullinix, who's been a foster parent for three years. "Having community that pours back in, and especially gelling with other people that can understand, relate, and commiserate is just absolutely huge and very uplifting."

Read more and watch the story at

<https://www.wbko.com/2023/10/25/inaugural-night-encouragement-hosted-foster-adoptive-families/>



Northeastern hosted a Holiday Dinner Event for foster parents and the children they care for in Morehead. This was an appreciation event for current families and also asked current families to bring a family (or two (or more)) with them that is interested in fostering.

At the event we provided dinner, had various activities such as wood ornaments for them to color/decorate, Christmas/holiday themed coloring pages, face painting, fake tattoos/stickers, bounce house, and Santa. Santa provided a gift to all of the children and youth that attended!

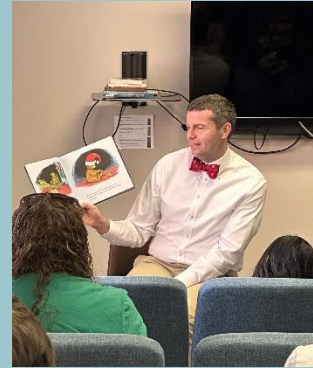
We had a wonderful time and turnout!

The West Lakes Region held their annual Christmas Part and Foster Parent Appreciation Event "A Hawaiian Christmas". We had over 400 people in attendance. Every family left with a themed gift basket. The families enjoyed various stations where they earned prizes as well refreshments. Santa and Mrs. Claus greeted each child and presented them with a bag full of toys. Even the Grinch made an appearance! Our community partners really showed out this year with donations and showed our foster families how much they are appreciated. Each November, biker groups across the nation come together for the Annual Toy Run which provides for all gifts for the children. Interestingly enough, Santa and Mrs. Claus used to ride in the toy run!



Regional Happenings CONT'D

Southern Bluegrass hosted their Annual Holiday Party for foster families! They hosted around 170 children at the event and with help from organizations throughout the region, they were able to provide cookie decorating, Santa, The Grinch, story time, pizza, games, gifts and raffles.



The Cumberland Region hosted a Christmas party for their foster parents on each side of the region (east and west)!

Cumberland West hosted their holiday event with Santa, Mrs. Clause, The Grinch and both Miss KY and Miss Teen! Families were able to participate in games, face painting, crafts, treats, hot cocoa and more!

Cumberland East had approximately 150 foster parents and children and approximately 50 local staff/teams to participate in their annual holiday party! The R&C team fixed soups and purchased sandwiches to serve the families. They also had pizza donated and Wal-Mart donated a large cake. Several teams set up their own tables and had games for the children, gave out gingerbread houses and some helped with our craft and face painting tables where the kids got to make Christmas ornaments. There were also photo opportunities for the children with Santa and the Grinch.



Eastern Mountain Region celebrated National Adoption Month by hosting a festive holiday dessert exchange highlighting foster and adoptive parents across our amazing and close-knit region. Held at the Knott County Sportsplex on November 28, 2023, the event was filled with delectable sweets, holiday cheer and fun fellowship! Community partners such as the Eastern Mountain Network Team, Thursday's Child, the Independent Living Program and WWK also graciously participated!



Foster/Adoptive Parent Resources

Engagement Resources for Teens in Foster Care

Identity formation begins in childhood and becomes even more important during the teenage years. [Research](#) shows former foster youth have statistically weaker identity strength than non-former foster youth.

With change being such a frequent part of life in foster care, it can be difficult for teens to form a healthy sense of self without immersion in their culture.

Identity is not developed by itself, and professionals must actively encourage exploration and provide opportunities for learning and growth.

When youth can interact and create [meaningful connections](#) with peers, adults, and mentors within their culture, they develop a stronger connection to their community and a more complete understanding of their identity.

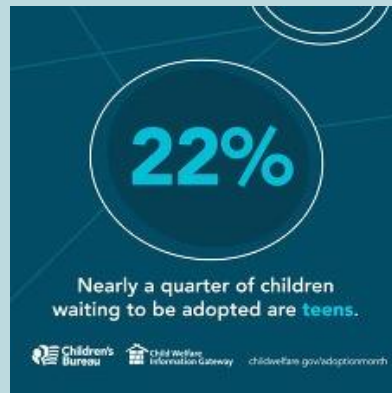
With greater confidence and supportive relationships, youth will feel more confident [using their voice](#) to express their permanency needs and goals.

These [resources](#) include content for youth by youth that will help them learn from their peers about how they can be successful in building their identity and achieving permanency goals.

[Engagement Resources for Teens](#)

Find more resources for teens and caregivers at the Child Welfare Information Gateway

[Youth | Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)



How parents can build trust: what 3 foster and adoptive families have found

As a parent, you likely understand how important a trusting relationship with your child is. For children in foster care, trauma experiences make building a trusting relationship even more vital.

As adoptee Catherine Monet shares, "Kids in care have experienced trauma. They'll be standoffish. I was like that. Don't push yourself on them or demand that they share details about their emotions and experiences. Because they probably won't trust you with their feelings at first. You need to demonstrate that you are trustworthy."

How can you demonstrate your trustworthiness? Read more about what three sets of foster and adoptive parents have said.

[AdoptUSKids: How Parents Can Build Trust](#)



Check out the new podcast "Navigating Adoption" and read more inspiring stories and helpful tips at the AdoptUSKids blog.

[AdoptUSKids blog](#)

News from Central Office

Foster Parent Surveys for ALL foster parents

The Annual Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey has been created to solicit feedback regarding your experiences during the past year, what has been successful and where we can improve. We value the feedback and experiences of each of our foster/adoptive parents and want to hear from you!

Each year, your feedback contributes to changes in practice, new trainings, new support groups and more. It may take time to see the changes but we want you to know that we hear you and we are working hard to show our appreciation and include you as part of the team for children and youth in Kentucky.

This year, we have extended the surveys to foster parents who are open with private child placing agencies. We want everyone's feedback to make Kentucky's foster care system the best it can be.

A survey link has been distributed through email to all current DCBS foster/adoptive parents and to agency personnel. We encourage you to please complete this survey so we can improve support and services for our foster parents. Survey responses are anonymous unless you chose to identify yourself at the end of the survey. The survey will close January 30th so don't wait!

Please find the link to the survey here: [2023 Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey](#)

2023 Foster/Adopt Inquiries

Word of mouth continues to be one of the best ways to encourage and recruit others to become foster/adoptive parents to the many children in care who need temporary or forever care. We know you don't love these children for the money, fortune or fame but please know that we are truly grateful and appreciative of the ways you encourage others with your voices and your actions.

This chart shows the sources noted on all foster/adopt inquiries to DCBS in 2023.

