

## EMPOWERING CAREGIVERS, STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

### RESILIENCY

#### A Therapeutic Foster Care Manager's Story

One of the most humbling roles I have the pleasure to fill as a therapeutic foster care case manager at the Family Care Network is facilitating a foster parent support meeting. As I survey the room of foster parents, I am struck by how everyone in the meeting is a true hero disguised as a "regular person."

The topics on any particular day in a foster parent support meeting include what this fun-loving group would refer to as "the usual." "The usual" is code for school suspensions, cancelled visits with parents, drug use, police encounters, runaways, cutting, visits to the local emergency room and, sadly, sexual exploitation. All of "the usual" are byproducts of very hurt and traumatized young people who have found their way into these heroes' homes. Not surprisingly, tears are shed in these support meetings as hearts break for the loved children in the care of all the people in the room. The humbling part of this for me is that the children are never blamed, criticized, or judged for their participation in "the usual." You might think that the meeting is to support the foster parents' efforts to not be angry or frustrated with the children in their care for what seems to be relentless disruptions in their lives. You'd be wrong. The support given to these parents is focused on problem solving to find the best ways to keep their loved ones safe from the world and, at times, from themselves.

I will freely admit that the most resilient people on the planet are children who are in foster care. A close second to them are the people I sit with in these foster parent support meetings. Every meeting, tears turn to laughter and sorrow gives way to hope as the foster parents hold each other up in a way that only another foster parent can. The amazing thing about all this is that even supporting one another in this venue is done out of a place of love for the children in their care and based on the knowledge that they can never have all the answers themselves. Using 2 hours of their "child-free time" to lift each other up is only a small manifestation of the daily sacrifice that these therapeutic foster parents make. Being a foster parent to any child is a noble undertaking. But being a therapeutic foster parent to the most hurt and misunderstood children in our communities who redefine what "the usual" means is nothing less than the act of a hero. I leave every foster parent support meeting with renewed hope and energy to "keep on keeping on." I can only imagine how these heroes truly impact the children they open their homes and lives to.



To learn about more the support programs provided by Family Care Network, a community-based organization that provides clinical and treatment services and supports to children and youth in a family setting with the goal of enhancing their safety, well-being, and permanence, visit <http://www.fcni.org/>. To find a kinship, foster, or adoptive parent support group in your area, visit Child Welfare Information Gateway's National Foster and Adoption Directory at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad/>.



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