
Resources for Charleston Area Foster Care Families

— Presented by: Caleb Davenport —
Moultrie Middle School

My Family

My family is me, my mom, my dad, and my dog and cat.

We started as a foster family when I was in the third grade.

We have had five children live with us.

Four of them were four years old (one turned 5 when he was with us) and one was a baby.

It's very frustrating sometimes but it's a good feeling to help children who do not have safe homes with their parents. Also, putting this slideshow together has brought me a sense of happy, but nostalgic, feelings.



Birthday Party for J with My Friends



Becoming a Foster Care Family

Getting Started

According to the South Carolina Department for Social Services (SCDSS) becoming a foster family is relatively easy.

The website says that it provides resources and personal assistance every step of the way for families interested in fostering children in their home. It provides a link that is supposed to show an easy to follow flow chart of each step in the process.

The website even has a link to click with resources to help foster families with everything they need to be successful and provide for the children.

Steps to becoming a foster care family as listed on the SCDSS website:

- Completed application
- Completed 14 hours of training
- Criminal background check, finger printing & check of the Central Registry of Abuse & Neglect for all household members 18 years & older
- Completed sex offender registry check for household members 12 years & older
- Enough bedrooms in the home to accommodate children in foster care
- Completed home study
- Personal references, financial information & medical reports for family members
- Successful fire, health & sanitation & lead inspections of the home

Our Reality of Becoming a Foster Family

Website Problems

There was nothing easy about being approved to become a foster family.

The link to the flow chart that is to provide easy to follow steps in the process, does not go to a flow chart.

The link to the resources to help foster families, is a dead link.

Office staff did not return my mom's phone calls or emails.

It was nearly a full year for us to be approved. It is no surprise to us that there is a severe shortage of foster care families.

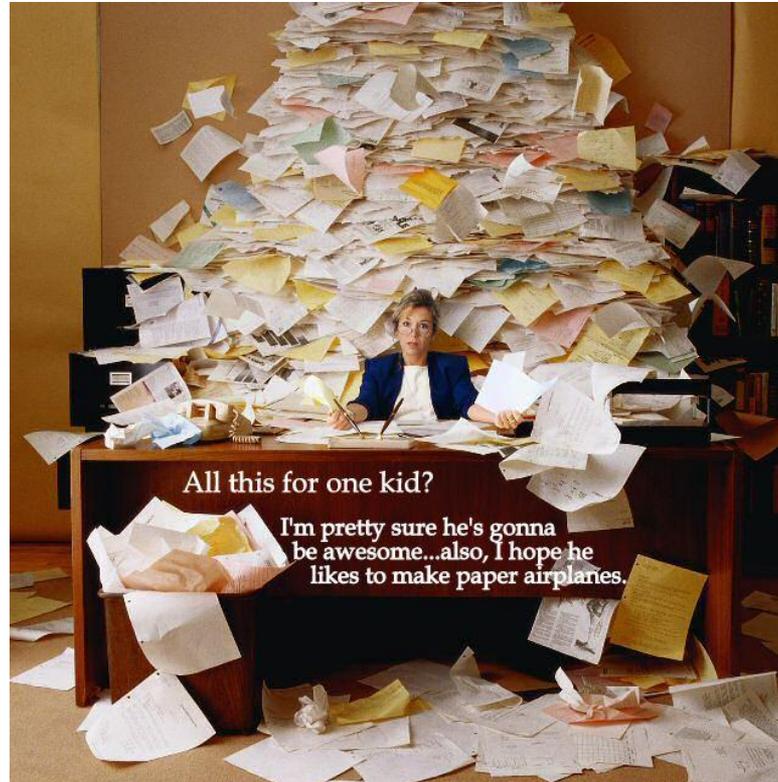
Approval Problems

Our application was accidentally handed off to the office of adoption. The office called us and confirmed that we wanted to foster, not adopt. Instead of walking our application across the hall to the correct office, they shredded our application and did not tell us. We only found out after making several follow up calls. We had to start the whole application over.

It took months to have inspectors come to our home to approve it for foster care.

Training classes were hard to find in our area.

My Parents & Mountains of Application Paperwork



The Problem Facing Foster Families

Problems

Families are called about children without any notice. My family's most advance notice was three hours. Once, we were called when the social worker and child were in front of our house.

Families can say that they accept children in a specific age range but they are called for all ages. Families who expect older children do not have baby supplies and those expecting babies and toddlers do not have a proper beds for an older child or teenager.

My Family's Experiences

My family had a four year old boy arrive with only a few items of clothing and they all smelled like cigarette smoke.

We had a six month old baby arrive with two bottles and four diapers. We had no baby supplies at all, not even a crib.

We had a little girl arrive on her fourth birthday. She had a small plastic bag of clothes and a balloon tied to her wrist that her social worker bought her on the way to our house.

How do foster families deal with immediate needs?

D's day of arrival and 4th birthday



How We Found Help

My mom got a call at work for a placement of two sisters. My mom is a teacher and told her 8th grade students. One of her student's family were foster care providers. The student's mom called my mom and told her about WIC for food and baby formula assistance. She also collected baby items from all of her neighbors to give to us. She lived in a wealthy neighborhood so we got a lot of good things.

The daycare bought outfits for the children.

My mom searched foster care help and found some Facebook groups.

My mom posted on her Facebook page that we were getting two girls and asked if anyone had any toys or baby items. Things started showing up at our door in less than an hour. Our chiropractor started a supply collection for us in her office.

Friends told my mom about local resources for assistance.

Help from friends was great but why didn't we know about local resources when the first foster child arrived?

Me with S & B



D and A on Halloween - friends gave them costumes



Resources for Foster Families

Lowcountry Orphan Relief

<http://lowcountryorphanrelief.org/>

843-747-4099

- Provides clothing, books, & toys

J:127 Ministry (Facebook Page)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/657389364433520/>

- Organization of several area churches that provide child care share, clothing, baby gear, holiday parties, & moral support

SC Region 3 Foster/Adopt (Facebook Page)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/842221532488741/>

- Provides advice, emergency contact numbers of social workers, foster family supply swap, respite care

MUSC Foster Care Support Clinic

<https://musckids.org/our-services/foster-care-support-services>

- Medical care for chronic illnesses, specialized care, & mental health

Bundles of Joy Diaper Bank of the Lowcountry (Facebook Page)

<https://www.facebook.com/Bundlesofjoydiaperbank/>

- Provides diapers and wipes

Charleston County WIC

<https://scdhec.gov/health/health-public-health-clinics>

- Provides baby formula & SNAP food assistance for children up to age five

Seacoast Church

<https://www.seacoast.org/>

- Sponsors birthday parties

Coastal Pediatric Associates

<https://www.cpakids.com/>

- Pediatric office with several locations, late night, and weekend appointments

How Students & Community Members Can Help

Volunteer at the Lowcountry Orphan Relief office. They need help sorting donations and filling orders for families.

Offer a few hours of free or discounted babysitting services for foster families. Child care is very expensive and foster families only receive about \$400 per month for all expenses.

Sponsor a diaper/wipe drive at school. Donate the items to Bundles of Joy.

Sponsor a toy and birthday party decoration drive at school. Donate the items to Seacoast Church for their birthday parties.

If you know of a fellow student who is in foster care, make an extra effort to build a friendship with him/her. It is difficult for anyone to be a new student and even more more difficult for students in foster care.

How I Will Help

Foster families need to know about resources for help right away. SCDSS is too busy to keep up their website and their social/case workers don't know about resources or don't know to share the information.

My mom helped me make a business card on Vista Print that has a list of Charleston area resources for foster families. Once the Covid-19 virus passes and it's safe to go out, we will give them to the DSS office & Moultrie's School Resource Officer to share with foster families when they take the children to their new homes.

Since they are business card size, they will be easy for social/case workers and officers to keep in their car for when they are needed.



Resources for Charleston Area Foster Families

Compiled by Caleb Davenport, Moultrie Middle School
as a service project with Centropa.org in honor of Milton Wolf

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Connection to Survival in Sarajevo

The movie *Survival in Sarajevo* is about people working together to save their neighbors in a time of war.

La Benevolencija helped people survive the war in Bosnia by making sure people didn't starve to death, get medical care, and had a way for people to communicate outside of the city. Everything was free. People of different ethnic groups and different religions were working together to help everyone who needed it. This was during a war where people were targeted because of their race. Even in terrible times, there are always people who will help. La Benevolencija worked with the JDC to arrange for buses to help people escape the war in Sarajevo by going to Israel.

Milton Wolf of the JDC, worked to save a Bosnian Muslim woman who saved a Jewish neighbor during the Holocaust. She risked her life to save people and Milton Wolf wanted to make sure she didn't die in a war fifty years later.

This community service project honors La Benevolencija, Milton Wolf, and all of the upstanders who help those in need.

Sources

<https://dss.sc.gov/foster-care/>

<http://lowcountryorphanrelief.org/>

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<https://www.vistaprint.com>