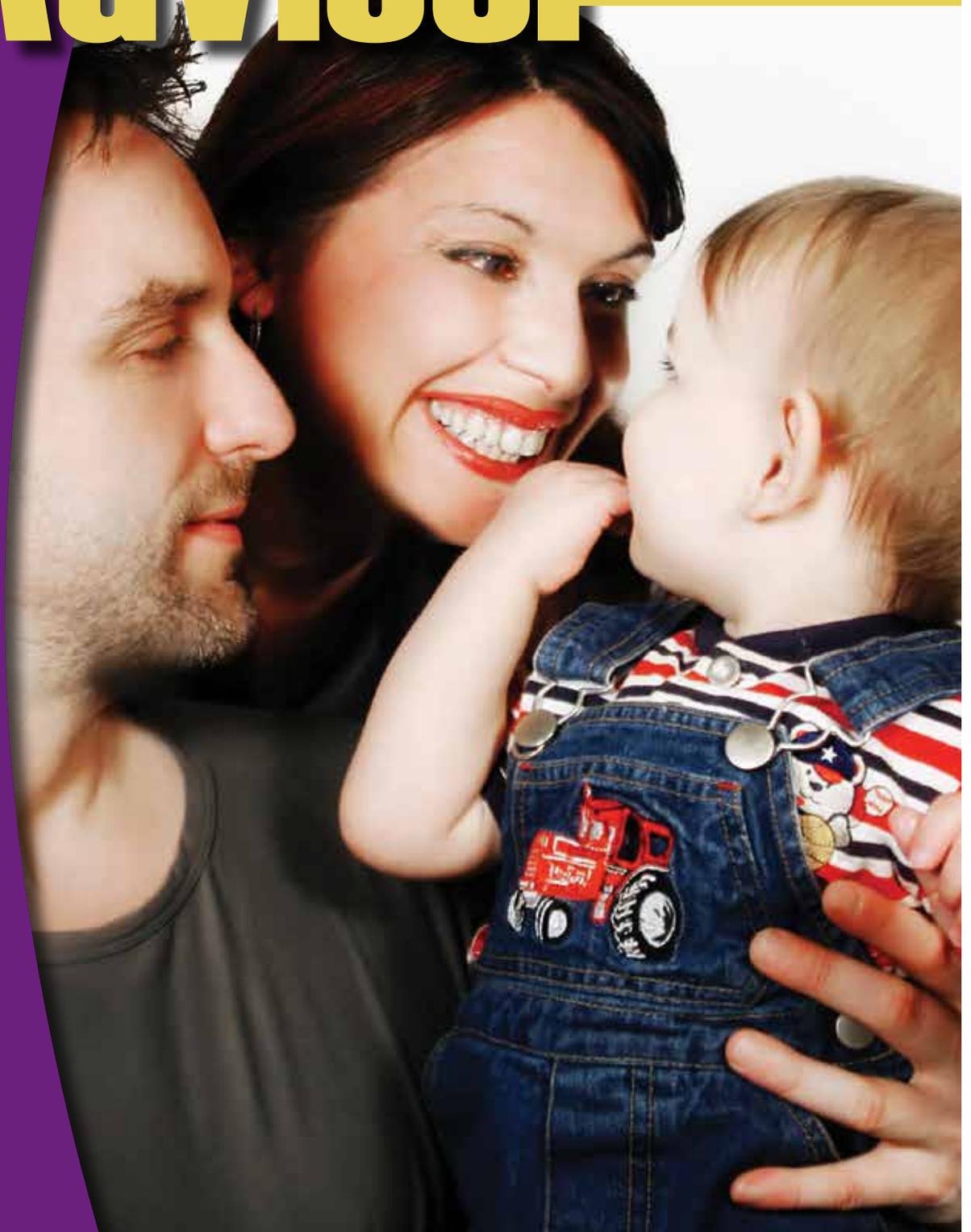


Advisor

Winter 2013



SASKATCHEWAN
FOSTER FAMILIES

www.sffa.sk.ca



Advisor

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THE GOVERNOR GENERAL · LE GOUVERNEUR GÉNÉRAL



Photo: Sgt Serge Gouin, Rideau Hall
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represented by the Office of the Secretary to the
Governor General (2010)

As the father of five children and the grandfather of ten grandchildren, family is especially important to me. I am therefore very pleased to mark National Foster Family Week.

Families, whatever their nature, are the cornerstone of the communities they build and the children they look after. I would like to congratulate the Canadian Foster Family Association, which has contributed for over 25 years to children's well-being by improving the resources and support available to foster parents. They play a key role in the development of so many children. Let us take this opportunity to recognize their dedication and to thank them for their generosity.

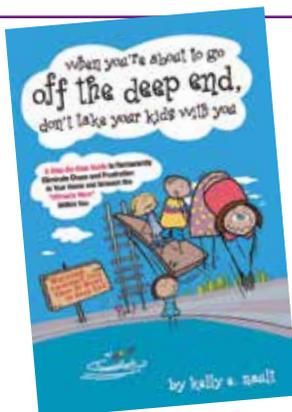
I wish to salute everyone taking part in the activities going on during National Foster Family Week throughout Canada, and I wish everyone the happiest of celebrations!



David Johnston

October 2013

bookcorner



When You're About to Go Off the Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids With You
by Kelly E. Nault

Learn about parenting skills and tips that increase family fun and inspire parents to bring out our best, so we can enjoy more of our kids' best!

Publisher: Stepping Stones for Life

ISBN-10: 0973493801

ISBN-13: 978-0973493801

***This book was a winner of a parenting media award and is available in the SFFA resource library for borrowing!*



PRIME MINISTER • PREMIER MINISTRE

I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to everyone marking National Foster Family Week 2013.

The many activities planned for this week by the Canadian Foster Family Association will raise awareness of, and celebrate, the vital role foster families play in the well-being of our children and in the development of a healthy society. Foster families open their hearts and homes to children living with complex needs, providing them with a sense of continuity and stability.

I commend the many individuals who strive, each and every day, to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of so many young people and their families. Their dedication contributes to the betterment of communities across Canada. I would also like to thank the Canadian Foster Family Association for their tireless commitment to the well-being of children in Canada.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I offer my best wishes for a memorable week.

The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.

OTTAWA
2013

Letter from the Editor

Our organization works to support foster parents as best we can. Behind the scenes is a dedicated, devoted staff that spends countless hours making sure that things run smoothly. Whether it's for advocacy, the first aid program, our in-home support program, volunteer training, recruitment, office support, or questions about your foster care journey, our executive director, board of directors and office staff are here for you. We're a team dedicated to providing you with the resources you need.



While being a parent is incredibly rewarding, it is also one of the toughest jobs in the world. One of the ways we want to serve you is to provide you with valuable

It's been a busy time around the office the past few months with the expansion of the in-home support program in Regina, the continued roll-out of the first aid program, the celebration of National Foster Family Week, and the volunteer training that was held in Saskatoon on November 1-2, 2013.

As we prepare to celebrate the holidays with our families, we want to thank you for opening your hearts and homes to vulnerable children in our province. From our families to yours, we'd like to extend best wishes for a wonderful Christmas season, blessed with health, happiness and peace and all the best for 2014.

"Parenting is one of the most challenging, demanding, and stressful jobs on the planet. It is also one of the most important, for how it is done influences in great measure the heart and soul and consciousness of the next generation, their experience of meaning and connection, their repertoire of life skills, and their deepest feelings about themselves and their possible place in a rapidly changing world."

– Jon and Myla Kabat-Zinn, *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting*

Kristine Scarrow

Editor, Advisor Magazine

“Saskatchewan Foster Families Association exists to support and encourage foster families through education and advocacy, helping create healthy homes, positive environments, and brighter futures for children and youth in care across the province and our organization works to support foster parents as best we can.”

The staff at the SFFA continually strives to fulfill our mission statement:

"Saskatchewan Foster Families Association exists to support and encourage foster families through education and advocacy, helping create healthy homes, positive environments, and brighter futures for children and youth in care across the province and our organization works to support foster parents as best we can."

up-to-date information about foster care and parenting in our newsletter. We strive to present a well-rounded compilation of information.

While you may not always agree with what you see in these pages, the information is presented because we feel it may be helpful to someone. If you have a story you'd like to submit, ideas for features or there are topics you'd like to see featured in future issues of *The Advisor*, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Saskatchewan Honours Foster Families

Saskatchewan is pleased to help celebrate the contribution of foster families across this province during Foster Families Week from October 20-26.

“Foster families in this province make a big difference in the lives of our children and youth,” Social Services Minister June Draude said. “I want to personally thank all of our dedicated and caring foster parents who provide our most vulnerable citizens with a place to call home.”

“People have commented to

my wife and I many times that the kids we fostered were so lucky to have us,” Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Social Services Greg Lawrence said. “We tell everyone that we were the lucky ones to have these kids in our life and in fact still stay in touch with some of them. As Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Social Services I’m hearing similar statements from foster parents across the province which proves how this role can really touch you and your family.”

“Foster parents play a vital role

in the lives of the young people they care for and support,” Saskatchewan Foster Families Association Executive Director Deb Davies said. “Through their hard work and compassion, foster parents are creating memories that will last a lifetime for children in need.”

For more information about foster families or becoming a foster parent, please visit the Social Services website at www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca or the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association website at www.sffa.sk.ca.



Bev Wiebe, training facilitator.

SFFA Volunteer Training

SFFA Volunteer Training was held November 1st and 2nd, 2013 at the Radisson Hotel in Saskatoon.

This 2-day training included sessions on “Journaling and Writing to Heal”, “Caring for Ourselves: Living Vicariously Through Trauma”, and “Caring for Others”.

Greg Lawrence, MLA for Moose Jaw Wakamow, was also in attendance on Friday evening to gather concerns from foster parents.

The SFFA would like to thank Bev Wiebe for leading the main training sessions.

Nancy MacFarlane Awarded *Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal*

Nancy MacFarlane, foster parent and Canadian Foster Family Association Treasurer, was among 30 Prince Edward Island Foster Parent recipients of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal.

A special ceremony was held on September 10, 2012 with Senators Catherine Callbeck and Elizabeth Hubley presenting the medals. The CFFA would like to congratulate Nancy and her husband Wayne, and the other foster parents who received this medal.

Foster families play a very important role in the lives of children and youth in care across Canada. It is nice to see foster parents being recognized for their dedication and commitment to children and youth.

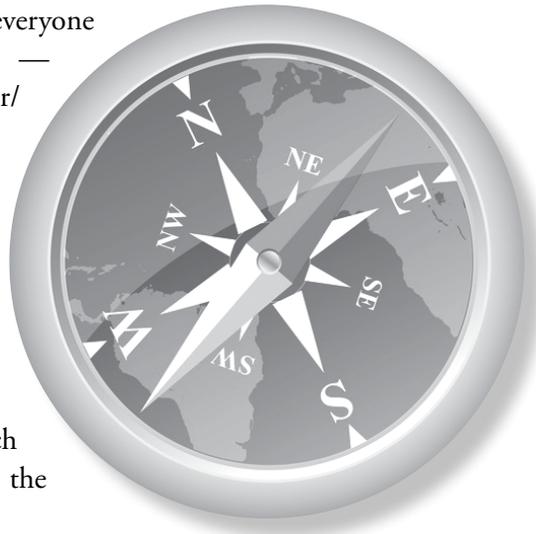


Navigating

the Holidays with foster and adoptive children

By David Erickson

In order for everyone in your family — including your foster/adoptive children — to have the greatest opportunity for enjoyable holidays, it is beneficial to be proactive. This involves good planning beforehand and a certain approach and response during the holidays.



Prepare Yourself

Keep your own emotional and physical energy reserves up. Plan ahead so you can get adequate sleep and not become overwhelmed. Holidays are stressful for parents, and if you slip into being frustrated, irritable and reactive, then the children will follow. If you can maintain a positive, playful outlook, children will more likely respond the same way to the holiday season.

Realistic Expectations

Even with the best planning and preparation, there will be some ups and downs and unexpected developments. A child will have a meltdown at the least

opportune time. Something will break, something will flop, something will be late, someone won't follow through. Learn to be adaptable and laugh at yourself and the situation. The goal is not a perfect day, but a relational day with quality interactions and memorable moments.

Organize the Holiday time

A child with a bored or idle mind can create a chaotic situation. Plan engaging and fulfilling activities for each child. Balance activities to be stimulating but not overwhelming. Be aware of each child's energy levels and plan the day so they can get rest or sleep or food before they get cranky and act out.

Activate the children's imagination and involvement

Depending on each child's abilities, involve them in the preparation for the holidays. Can they help find items in the store that are on the grocery list? Can they do any home decorating? Can they help make popcorn balls or string popcorn? Can they make any art or home decorations? Can they make any drawings on cards or cardstock to represent the season? Can they make any homemade gifts?

Creative challenges are the key

What are each child's interest and talents, and can they make something or help with something that can be shared with others during the holiday gathering? Help them to feel important and needed, and that they have contributed to a special day for the entire family. Sometimes if they learn a creative way to fold napkins or add topping to dessert it makes them feel special. Can they write a poem or make a stained glass type artwork out of coloured tissue paper?

Take time for each child

It is easy for children to get “lost” in the middle of all the to-do lists and what needs to get done. Then they are more likely to act out to get your attention. Find out what they want and they enjoy during this season. Connect with them and give individualized attention. Enlist their help with what you need to get done for the holiday and give them plenty of positive praise for their efforts! If they get sad about their biological family, slow down and listen, and have them write a letter or card for their mom or other relative, even if they can't be with them during the holiday.

Invite their involvement and initiative

How can they help you with any shopping, meals, decorating, and preparations? What holiday traditions and activities do they want? How can they help with that? Can they gather any wood or sticks for a marshmallow roast? Can they help make a table decoration? Can they help

unpack a box? Can they figure out how to get a string of lights to work?

Viva! – Live in the moment

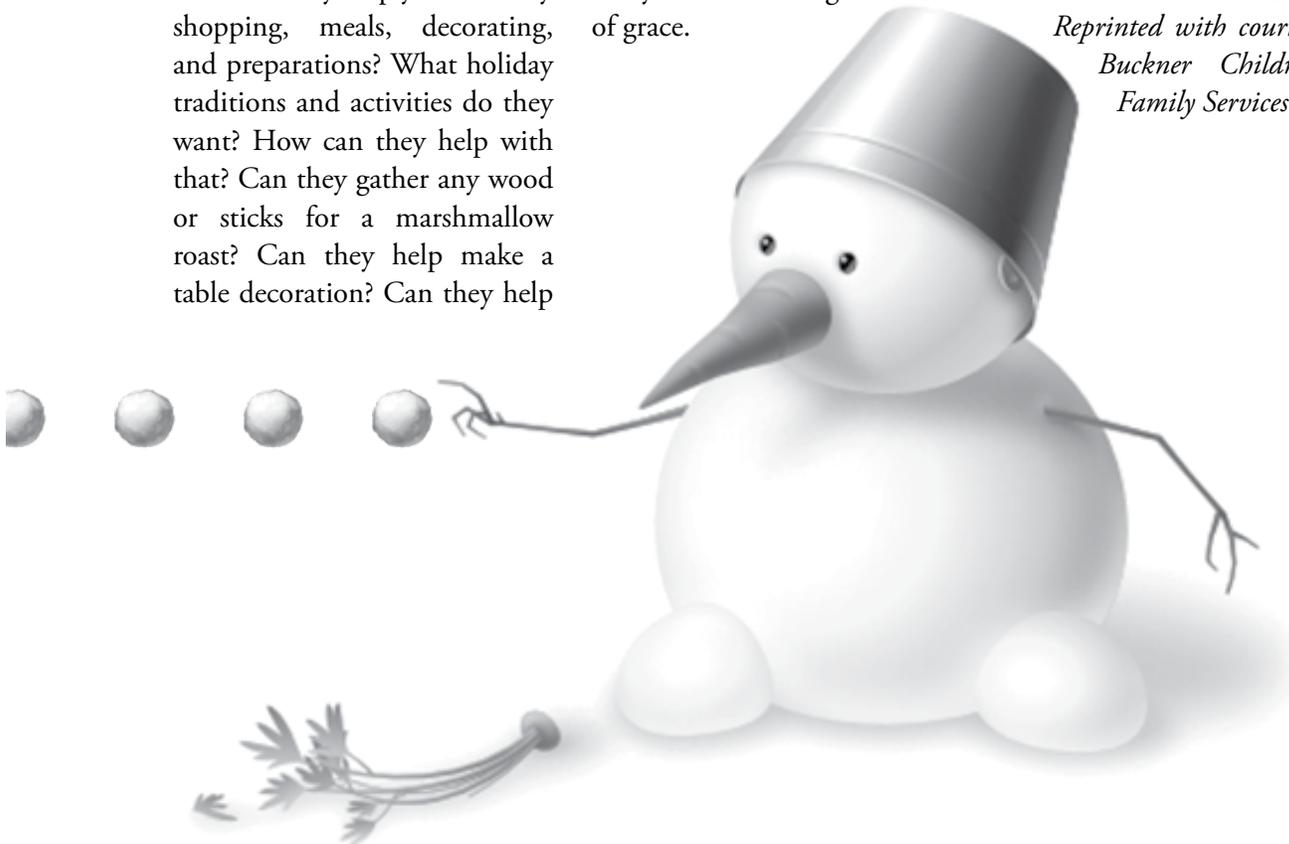
Enjoy the process and not just the finished product. Help children catch your enjoyment in the anticipation and planning for a great holiday. Approach putting something together as a team challenge rather than another thing to do. Make it your goal for everyone to make memories of the holiday – mostly about how you spent time together and enjoyed each other's company. Help everyone to remember the reason for the season, whether it is celebration of being blessed with safety or freedom of our faith or abundance, or with remembering the birth of Jesus and the hope and life He gave to us by His love and gift of grace.

Engage with genuine interactions

Make it a goal that everyone will either be better known or know others better during the holiday time together. This can include you sharing about positive holiday memories from your childhood, even showing old photos. It can include trying and incorporating new holiday traditions, activities, or food from their past. It can include a celebration of time together experiencing new things, or just by being together and watching a favorite movie. Talk about what each person liked the best. If you have fun and enjoy the moments, they likely will as well!

David Erickson is a foster care and adoption case manager for Buckner Children and Family Services in Conroe, Texas.

Reprinted with courtesy from Buckner Children and Family Services.



FORMAL DOCUMENTATION as a Foster Parent

Documentation – what does that mean?

Dictionary definition:

“The paper that furnishes information, proof, or support of something else.”

When you document, you are establishing a method of proving/documenting any events/incidents that take place in or outside of our homes. Documentation is a record.

Why is it important?

- Recording what happens on a daily basis
- You may see a pattern forming
- A record helps with getting support and services for both the foster child and the foster family as a whole

Is it really necessary?

Studies show that writing helps you remember more. It works to store information into long-term memory.

And don't put it off—DO IT NOW!

If you keep telling yourself that you'll do it later, you'll either :

- not get to it
- forget pertinent facts or details which could make a huge difference

Always keep it safe and out-of-sight from others!

Documentation is your BEST line of defense!

- Documentation offers you protection in the case of allegations.
- It may not make the allegation disappear, but it can help the investigation.
- It can offer you peace of mind and self-protection.

How should I document?

Having these tools will help you:

- a notebook or 3-ring binder
- a calendar
- forms provided to you from the SFFA
- reward charts

- e-mails (by printing out correspondence, you have an instant record of the date and time and can slip it into your binder)

Use the “who, what, where, how” when a child arrives...

- Name/Age
- Date/Time of Arrival
- Condition of the child
- Who brought the child
- Possessions
- Note any marks on the child's body
- How the child settled in

Use the “who, what, where, when, how” for incident reports...

- Who: Who was involved or present when the incident occurred?
- What: What happened? Who said what? What led up to the event?
- When: When did it occur?
- Where: Where did it occur?
- How: How was the situation handled? What did you say or do and how was that received?

Remember:

- Stick to the facts

**By keeping records of what is happening in your home, we are better able to help you when you call for support and this can help to secure additional services, supports and resources you may need!*

The Government of Saskatchewan is proud to join with young women across the globe to celebrate **International Day of the Girl**. This day recognizes girls and young women as powerful voices of change in their families, communities and nations. The international theme for this year's celebration is *Keeping Girls Cyber-Safe*.

“As a woman in leadership and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I am very proud to recognize this important day,” Social Services Minister and Minister responsible for the Status of Women June Draude said. “This is a great opportunity for all of us to learn more about the issues facing girls, encourage



INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF THE
GiRL
Celebrated



the sharing of information on ways to keep them cyber-safe and celebrate their limitless potential.”

“Awareness on this issue is important and requires ongoing collaboration,” Justice Minister and Attorney General Gordon Wyant said. “Over the past few months, I have been

working with my provincial and federal colleagues to address cyberbullying in the Criminal Code. As a result, I'm pleased that a collaborative report recommending various actions to strengthen the criminal law was recently released.”

In Saskatchewan, the issue of sexualization and cyber-violence

that can occur through social media has been raised by girls and their parents as an area that needs to be addressed. In response, the Status of Women Office has produced a set of cyber-safety tips for girls. In addition, cyber-safety fact sheets have been distributed to schools across the province and posted on the Status of Women Office website at <http://www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca/swo/>. The Government of Saskatchewan is also developing a comprehensive anti-bullying strategy to address cyber-bullying and cyber-safety.

Canada led the call for an International Day of the Girl at the United Nations in order to raise awareness about the particular challenges that girls face and to take action. Canadians first celebrated the **International Day of the Girl** on October 11, 2012.

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Tips for Youth in Foster Care for getting through the *Holidays*



Stay connected to family and friends

Purchase or make cards to send out to family and friends during the holidays. It's a great time to create or update your address book.

Be respectful of a foster family's privacy and check with them to see if you should place the return address of their house on the envelope or if you should use an alternative, like the address of the foster care agency (some people may have concerns about the safety of the home if too many people have the address). Make phone calls to friends from an old neighborhood or to previous foster families. (Get your family's OK first).



Let 'em wag

If you're feeling a little lonesome and if you're a dog lover, you're in a category with lots of other people who adore pets. Throughout the holidays, your Humane Society may need help in adopting out animals. During this rewarding work you can walk and bathe dogs, teach them new tricks, and help them find good homes. Some shelters hold photos sessions as fundraisers so pet owners can have their dog or cat pose with Santa. Check with your local shelter or pet store to see if they might be hosting a fundraiser of this kind and how you can assist them.



Speak up for visits

Let your foster parents and caseworker know how important visits are to you during the holidays. Do what you can to help arrange the visits, by being flexible with your schedule or helping to make the arrangements with those you wish to visit. Understand that the holidays can be a busy time for everyone, so you may need to "remind" foster parents frequently to do what it takes to get a visit arranged.



Connect at church

If you belong to a church, check into all the holiday activities that might be going on and join in! Activities around the holidays might include social gatherings, caroling (singing around the neighborhood), volunteer efforts, and extra services. If you do not belong to a church but have been thinking about joining one, the holidays can be a fun time to get acquainted with a church or churches in your community.



Write on

If you like to write, keep a daily journal for the holiday season. Use your writing as a way to vent feelings, work through anxiety and worries, and to reflect on the true meaning of the holidays. Some find it helpful to write “letters”, even if they will never be sent, to loved ones you are missing or who have passed away. If you are inclined, you can send your stories to us at the SFFA.



Be Yourself

Chances are you'll naturally be meeting and running into lots of people during the holiday season. The simplest things can connect you to someone, and one of the easiest places to get started is by being yourself and showing kindness. Compliments always make people feel special and recognized. Start by noticing something unusual or unique about the person. Admire a piece of their jewelry, or shoes they're wearing, or their impressive vocabulary. By pointing out something remarkable and singular, you can easily start up a conversation or make a new friend.



Lend a hand

Volunteering can unite people with similar values. Offer to help the Salvation Army with their Christmas dinner for needy people. Hold reading sessions for kids at your local library or bookstore where you can read their favorite holiday stories to them. If you're uncertain where to start, ask your foster parent, caseworker or a neighbor to help you research the possibilities (who knows — they may even join you!).



You'll make it

Everyone appreciates a homemade gift. Consider making holiday ornaments, knitting scarves, or crafting bookmarks.

Search the internet for ideas and instructions about making inexpensive holiday crafts. Most everyone loves homemade cookies or candies wrapped in pretty boxes.



Visit others who may feel alone

Older people in a retirement or nursing home may be away from loved ones during the holidays. Check with the home or a local hospital to find out if there are people who would enjoy having company during the holidays. Consider bringing a favorite holiday story to read aloud or load your iPod with a favorite Christmas song (you may have to explain how you got the song in there!).



Connect with others

Connect with your peers who may be feeling the winter blues or who may be struggling with the holidays. Let us know how you spend the holidays and give your own ideas about how to find your own peace during the season.

Source: <http://nc.casaforchildren.org>

Social Services Minister June Draude responds to report from BC representative for children and youth

The following is a statement by Social Services Minister June Draude regarding the report issued from the BC Representative for Children and Youth:

The Ministry of Social Services accepts the findings of the report from the BC Representative for Children and Youth as well as the further observations made by the BC Representative and thanks them for their work.

It is a horrific tragedy whenever a child is abused or neglected at the hands of their caregiver. Tragedies like this are heartbreaking and warrant our utmost attention, along with action to try to prevent this from happening again.

The ministry has started the work on addressing these observations and will continue to work closely with the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth to report on our progress.

Many changes have already taken place since the time of this incident which have improved the lives of children and families. The Cabinet Committee on Children and Youth was established in December 2010 in response to the Child Welfare Review Panel's final report, we have created 90 new front-line child welfare positions throughout the province, improving capacity and ability to provide services to children and families, we have continued implementation of intensive family supports in

targeted communities, and the ministry has implemented the Structured Decision Making® (SDM) model in all ministry service centres and in two First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies, providing a new model for assessment of risk in child protection cases.

While we cannot go back and change what occurred, we can and will continue to review, learn from what happened and make every effort to ensure it does not happen in the future.

*For more information, contact:
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Social Services Minister June Draude responds to child death

The following is a statement by Social Services Minister June Draude regarding the death of Lee Bonneau:

I want to extend my sincerest sympathy to the family, friends and communities affected by Lee's death. My heart goes out to you.

Last week, I wrote a letter to the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, requesting that his office begin a review of this case. Given the gravity of

this heartbreaking situation, I believe an immediate review is required.

The death of this child in the care of the ministry and the circumstances of his death can only be described as a tragedy. It is my hope that an independent review led by the Advocate's office will help us to gain some understanding of how this could have occurred and what, if anything, we can do to prevent another such tragedy from occurring.

The Ministry of Social Services will also be conducting a child death review, and will participate as requested in the review being done by the Advocate's Office.

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This winter, don't hibernate, *participate!*

Reprinted with credit to EatRightOntario.ca; Copyright Dietitians of Canada.

Winter provides a wonderful opportunity to get active and discover the great outdoors... or the great indoors if the cold isn't your cup of hot chocolate!

Although Canadians tend to be less active in the winter that might change if they knew physical activity actually boosts the immune system. That makes it easier to fight colds and the flu. Being active can also help combat depression, including Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a form of depression that some people live with, caused by lack of exposure to sunlight during the shorter winter days. Maintaining a healthy body weight is also easier when you are active.

What really helps people become and stay physically active all winter long is the pure enjoyment of it. Review these tips and pick one or two that you would like to try.

Take it outside

Say hello to snow!

- Create a 3-D family portrait. Build a snow-person look-alike for each family member. Make a family of snow angels.
- Build snow castles, mazes, or snow sculptures
- Go tobogganing. Remember the helmets!
- Plan a family game of snow pitch (slow pitch in the snow) or neighbourhood game of "Capture the Snowball".
- Use food colouring in a spray bottle to create a hopscotch game on the snow.
- Enjoy the winter wonderland while hiking nature trails or walking on a beach.
- Try skating on an outdoor rink.
- Snowshoeing and cross country skiing are wonderful family outings. You can rent equipment at some outdoor activity centres or parks.

Continued on next page...

Indoor fun

Often our winters are short on snow, but tall on cold temperatures! On those days, when you may be tempted to forgo physical activity altogether, why not:

- Organize a house fitness circuit. Include jumping jacks in the living room, wall push-ups in the bedroom, kicks in the kitchen, etc
- Help with housework. Tidy up and vacuum with vigor.
- Play active games. Break up the day with a game of Twister or Simon Says.
- Create a silly family winter dance. Enjoy some of your favourite music too!
- Go swimming. Also try indoor skating, bowling and indoor playgrounds.
- Take in a museum. Walk a mall or an art gallery.

Stay energized with healthy food you can pack to go or eat at home

Snacks:

- Fresh or canned fruit with yogurt, water
- Whole wheat pita bread, cut up raw veggies and hummus as dip, water

Meals:

- Vegetarian chili in a thermos, multi-grain roll, hot chocolate in a thermos
- Bean and vegetable soup in a thermos, whole wheat crackers, hot, pasteurized apple cider in a thermos

Food safety tips:

- Keep cold food cold and hot food hot using either ice packs or a thermos and insulated picnic bag.
- If you can't wash your hands, bring along some hand sanitizer.

Make active play part of your kids' homework!

Active outdoor fun helps children feel good and keep fit. After-school you or your caregiver along with the children could:

- Play snowman tag.
- Try a bean bag toss in the snow or throw a ball around.
- Have a game of snoccer (soccer in the snow).
- Go mountain climbing...okay, maybe just scale the snow banks in your yard or at the park. Or build your own snow pile in your yard. Be sure to stay away from roads and supervise young children if there is no fence or gate.

- Play driveway hockey.

Be sure to pack an after-school snack with foods from two food groups and some water, 100% juice or hot chocolate. Children get thirsty while being active outdoors, even in the winter.

Plan an active family holiday

If you're planning a family holiday this winter, look for opportunities to fit in physical activity.

Here are some ideas:

- Go on a ski or snowboarding trip.
- Visit friends, rent a cottage or go to a resort where you can try cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, tobogganing, tubing and skating, or even dog sledding.
- Going to a warmer climate? Choose a destination that offers lots of physical activities, such as sailing, kayaking, swimming, snorkeling, cycling, pool or beach volleyball, basketball, exercise rooms, or fitness classes.
- Staying home? Plan day trips and try a new physical activity each time: hiking or bird-watching at a local conservation area or provincial park. Be a tourist in your own city or a nearby community and visit the galleries and museums.
- If you are sightseeing, choose walking tours or take your own walking tour.

A word about safety

Safety is important in every season. In the winter, consider the following:

- Dress for the weather. Hats, neck-warmers and waterproof mitts are essential.
- Dress in layers so that you can remove them as you warm up and put them back on when you cool down.
- Keep ears, fingertips, toes and your head covered.
- Always wear a helmet when skiing, snowboarding, skating, playing hockey and tobogganing.
- If you're trying a sport or activity for the first time, consider taking a lesson.
- Wear sunscreen when being active outdoors and drink plenty of fluids.
- For more information about how to keep safe and prevent injuries, call your local health department or visit Safe Kids Canada.

So this winter, remember – don't hibernate, participate!

What Foster Parents *wish* other people knew...

by Sharon Astyk

1. We're not freakin' saints.

We are doing this because it needs doing, we love kids, this is our thing. Some of us hope to expand our families this way, some of us do it for the pleasure of having laughing young voices around, some of us are pushed into it by the children of family or friends needing care, some of us grew up around formal or informal fostering – but all of us are doing it for our own reasons BECAUSE WE LOVE IT and/or LOVE THE KIDS and WE ARE THE LUCKY ONES – we get to have these great kids in our lives.

We hate being told we must be saints or angels, because we're doing something really ordinary and normal – that is, taking care of kids in need. If some children showed up dirty and hungry and needing a safe place on your doorstep, you'd care for them too – we just signed up to be the doorstep they arrive at. The idea of sainthood makes it impossible for ordinary people to do this – and the truth is the world needs more ordinary, human foster parents. This also stinks because if we're saints and angels, we can't ever be jerks or human or need help, and that's bad, because sometimes this is hard.

2. Watch what you say around the kids!

I can't emphasize this enough, and everyone is continually stunned by the things people will ask in the hearing of children, from "Oh, is their mom an addict?" or "Well, they aren't your real kids are they?" or "Are you going to adopt them?" or whatever. Not only is that stuff private, but it is horrible for the kids to hear people speculating about their families whom they love, or their future. Didn't anyone ever explain to you that you never say anything bad about anyone's mother (or father) ever? Don't assume you know what's going on, and don't ask personal questions – we can't tell you anyway.

3. Don't act surprised that they are nice, smart, loving, well-behaved kids.

One of the corollaries of #1 is that there tends to be an implied assumption that foster kids are flawed – we must be saints because NO ONE ELSE would take these damaged, horrible kids. Well, kids in foster care have endured a lot of trauma, and sometimes that does come with behavioural challenges, but many of the brightest, nicest, best behaved, kindest and most loving children I've ever met are foster kids. They aren't second best kids, they aren't homicidal maniacs, and because while they are here they are mine, they are the BEST KIDS IN THE WORLD, and yes, it does tick me off when you act surprised they are smart, sweet and loving.

4. Don't hate on their parents.

Especially don't do it in front of the kids, but you aren't on my side when you are talking trash either. Nobody chooses to be born mentally ill. No one gets addicted to drugs on purpose. Nobody chooses to be born developmentally delayed, to never have lived in a stable family so you don't know how to replicate it. Abusive and neglectful parents often love their kids and do the best they can, and a lot of them CAN do better if they get help and support, which is what part of this is about. Even if they can't, it doesn't make things better for you to rush to judgement. It is much easier to think of birth parents as monsters, because then YOU could never be like THEM, but truly, birth parents are just people with big problems. Birth and foster parents often work really hard to have positive relationships with each other, so it doesn't help me to have you speculating about them.

5. The kids aren't grateful to us, and it is nuts to expect them to be, or to feel lucky that they are with us.

They were taken from everything they knew and had to give up: parents, siblings, pets, extended family, neighbourhood, toys--everything that was normal to them. No one asked them whether

Continued on next two pages...

they wanted to come into care. You have complex feelings and ambivalence about a lot of things, even if it seems like those things are good for you or for the best. Don't assume our kids don't have those feelings, or that moving into our home is happily-ever-after for them. Don't tell them how lucky they are or how they should feel.

By the way, there is no point comparing my home to the one they grew up in. Both homes most likely have things the children like and dislike about them. The truth is if every kid only got the best home, Angelina and Brad would have all the children, and the rest of us would have none.

6. No, we're not making any money on it.

We don't get paid – we get a portion of the child's expenses reimbursed, and that money is only for the child and does NOT cover everything. I get about 56 cents an hour reimbursed, and I get annoyed when you imply I'm too stupid to realize I'd make tons more money flipping burgers. Saying this in front of the kids also REALLY hurts them – all of a sudden, kids who are being loved and learning to trust worry that you are only doing this because of their pittance. So just shut up about the money already, and about the friend of a friend you know who kept the kids in cages and did it just for the money and made millions.

7. When you say "I could never do that" as if we're heartless or insensitive, because we can/have to give the kids back to their parents or to extended family, it stings.

Letting kids go IS really hard, but someone has to do it. Not all kids in care come from irredeemable families. Not everyone in a birth family is bad – in fact, many kin and parents are heroic, making unimaginable sacrifices to get their families back together through impossible odds. Yes, it is hard to let kids we love go, and yes, we love them, and yes, it hurts like hell, but the reality is that because something is hard doesn't make it bad, and you aren't heartless if you can endure pain for the greater good of your children. You are just a regular old parent when you put your children's interests ahead of your own.

8. No, they aren't ours yet.

And they won't be on Thursday either, or next Friday, or the week after. Foster care adoption TAKES A LONG TIME. For the first year MINIMUM the goal is always for kids to return to their parents. It can take even longer than that. Even if we hope to adopt, things could change, and it is just like any long journey – it isn't helpful to ask "Are we there yet" every five minutes.

9. Most kids will go home or to family, rather than being adopted.

Most foster cases don't go to adoption. Not every foster parent wants to adopt. And not every foster family that wants to adopt will be adopting/wants to adopt every kid. It is NOT appropriate for you to raise the possibility of adoption just because you know they are a foster family. It is ESPECIALLY not appropriate for you to raise this issue in front of the kids. The kids may be going to home or to kin. It may not be an adoptive match. The family may not be able to adopt now. They may be foster-only. Not all older children want or choose to be adopted, and after a certain age, they are allowed to decide. Family building is private and none of everyone's business. They'll let you know when you need to know something.

10. If we're struggling – and all of us struggle sometimes – it isn't helpful to say we should just "give them back" or remind us we brought it on ourselves.

ALL parents pretty much brought their situation on themselves whether they give birth or foster, but once you are a parent, you deal with what you've got no matter what. "I told you so" is never helpful. This is especially true when the kids have disabilities or when they go home. Yes, we knew that could happen. That doesn't make it any easier.

11. Foster kids are not "fake kids", and we're not babysitters – they are all my "REAL kids."

Some of them may stay forever. Some of them may go and come back. Some of them may leave and we'll never see them again. But that's life, isn't it? Sometimes people in YOUR life go away, too, and they don't stop being an important part of your life or being loved and missed. How they come

into my family or for how long is not the point. While they are here they are my children's REAL brothers and sisters, my REAL sons and daughters. We love them entirely, treat them the way we do all our kids, and never, ever forget them when they leave. Don't pretend the kids were never here. Let foster parents talk about the kids they miss. Don't assume that kids are interchangeable – one baby is not the same as the next, and just because there will be more kids later doesn't make it any easier now.

12. Fostering is HARD.

Take how hard you think it will be and multiply it by ten, and you are beginning to get the idea. Exhausting, gut-wrenching and stressful as heck. That said, it is also great, and mostly utterly worth it. It is like Tom Hanks' character in "A League of Their Own" says about baseball: "It is supposed to be hard. If it wasn't hard everyone would do it. The hard is what makes it great."

13. You don't have to be a foster parent to HELP support kids and families in crisis.

If you want to foster, GREAT – the world needs more foster families. But we also need OTHER kinds of help. You can:

- Treat foster parents with a new placement the way you would a family that had a baby – it is JUST as exhausting and stressful. If you can offer to cook dinner, help out with the other kids, or lend a hand in some way, it would be most welcome.
- Offer up your children's outgrown stuff to pass on – foster parents who do short-term fostering send a lot of stuff home with the kids, and often could use more. Alternatively, many communities have a foster care closet or donation center that would be grateful for your pass-downs in good condition.
- Be an honorary grandparent, aunt or uncle. Kids need as many people in their lives as possible, and relationships that say "you are special".
- Become a respite provider, taking foster children for a week or a weekend so their parents can go away or take a break.
- Offer to babysit. Foster parents have lives,

plus they have to go to meetings and trainings, and could definitely use the help.

- Be a big brother, sister or mentor to older foster kids. Preteens and teens need help imagining a future for themselves – be that help.
- Be an extra pair of hands when foster families go somewhere challenging - offer to come along to the amusement park, to church, to the playground. A big family or one with special needs may really appreciate just an extra adult or a mother's helper along.
- Support local anti-poverty programs with your time and money. These are the resources that will hopefully keep my kids fed and safe in their communities when they go home.
- If you've got extra, someone else can probably use it. Lots of foster families don't have a lot of spare money for activities – offering your old hockey equipment or the use of your swim membership is a wonderful gift.
- Make programs for kids friendly to kids with disabilities and challenges. You may not have thought about how hard it is to bring a disabled or behaviourally challenged kid to Sunday school, the pool, the local kids' movie night – but think about it now, and encourage inclusion.
- Teach your children from the beginning to be welcoming, inclusive, kind and non-judgmental. Teach them the value of having friends from different neighbourhoods, communities, cultures, races and levels of ability. Make it clear that bullying, unkindness and exclusion are NEVER okay.
- Welcome foster parents and their family into your community warmly, and ASK them what they need, and what you can do.

14. Reach out to families in your community that are struggling – maybe you can help so that the children don't ever have to come into foster care, or to make it easier if they do.

Some families really need a ride, a sitter, some emotional support, some connection to local resources. Lack of community ties is a HUGE risk factor for children coming into care, so make the attempt.

REGINA**Christmas Lights Across Canada 2013***December 5, 2013*

Saskatchewan Legislative Building: 2405 Legislative Drive Saskatchewan participates with Canada's capital and the provincial/territorial capitals in turning on the Christmas lights adorning the Legislative Buildings. Join us for an evening of festival activities. Lights are turned on at 6:55pm. No admission charge. Full wheelchair access.

SASKATOON**BHP Billiton Enchanted Forest Holiday Light Tour***November 15 to January 5, 2014 (every evening 5:30 – 11pm)*

A spectacular forest drive-through Christmas light show featuring illuminated evergreens and computer animated character light displays on a 2.5km route.

Prices at the Gate:

Per Person \$8, Per Car \$30

(Maximum 7 people)

3 years or under Free

(Cash only at the gate)

Save \$5 off gate admission by purchasing an Enchanted Forest Car Pass for \$25 at all Saskatoon Safeway and Shoppers Drug Mart locations, and the Midtown Plaza Kiosk.

PRINCE ALBERT**2014 Saskatchewan Winter Games** will be held in Prince Albert! *February 16 - 22, 2014*

For over 40 years

Saskatchewan's young athletes have been participating in the Saskatchewan Games. These biennial games not only provide

athletes with an opportunity to test their sport specific skills but they also work to develop and promote individual sports across Saskatchewan.

More information can be found at <http://saskgames.ca/home>

MOOSE JAW**Santa Claus Parade***Sunday, December 1, 2013 at 7:00 pm*

Presented by Moose Jaw Times Herald & Kinsmen Club of Moose Jaw. Downtown Moose Jaw starting at the bottom of Main (by Training Station).

MEADOW LAKE**Meadow Lake Festival of Trees***November 29-30, 2013*

Friday: Viewing

Saturday: Dinner and Auction Civic Centre (412 3rd St East)

YORKTON**Strengthening Families Together***December 11, 2013 at 7:00 pm*

A group for families and friends of individuals with a mental illness. Sessions will offer an opportunity for participants to talk about the daily challenges they face and the chance to connect with others, learn coping skills, and gain knowledge through information about mental illness.

Yorkton Mental Health Drop-in Centre, 83 North Street

Contact Rachel Pereverzoff

at 306-783-8135 or at:

rp.yorktonmentalhealthdropin@gmail.com

Website: www.facebook.com/pages/Supporting-Mental-Health-group-in-Yorkton/304226886349846

com/pages/Supporting-Mental-Health-group-in-Yorkton/304226886349846

Yorkton/304226886349846

Santa Clause Parade

November 30, 2013 at 5:30 pm
From the corner of Seventh Avenue South it will turn left (west) on Broadway St. proceeding west to Laurier Ave, then turn left (south) on Laurier and will disburse on Independent Street.

SWIFT CURRENT**CP Holiday Train***December 6, 2013 at 12:30 pm*

(Downtown Swift Current)

North America's longest-running food bank fundraiser now in its 15th year is taking its unique journey across Canada and the US Midwest and Northeast in a cross-border mission to feed our communities.

The CP Holiday Train will arrive in downtown Swift Current at approximately 12:30 pm, east of the train station at 3rd Ave NE and North Railway St. Non-perishable food donations for the local food bank are welcome. Entertainers on the Canadian train include Melanie Doane & Doc Walker.

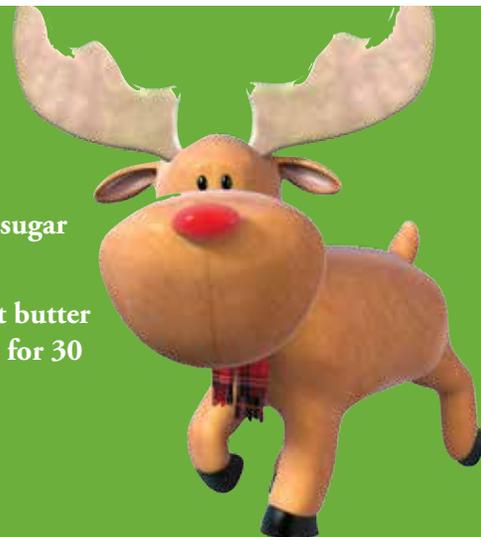
LLOYDMINSTER**Christmas Fantasy at Lloydminster Cultural & Science Centre***December 14, 2013**(11am – 3pm)*

The Lloydminster Cultural & Science Centre invites residents to celebrate the holiday season by taking part in the annual Christmas Fantasy. Since 1990, this festive event has become a longstanding tradition for the LCSC featuring activities for all ages to enjoy.

Easy Reindeer *Kibble* (in the microwave)

- 9 cups of Chex cereal (I use rice Chex)
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter or WowButter (for nut allergies)
- 1/4 cup butter (or margarine)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar

1. Measure cereal and place in large bowl—set aside.
2. In 1-quart microwaveable bowl, microwave chocolate chips, peanut butter and butter uncovered for 1 minute. Stir. If not smooth, microwave for 30 more seconds. Stir in vanilla.
3. Pour mixture over cereal and stir with spatula until evenly coated.
4. Pour into 2-gallon sealable plastic bag.
5. Add powdered sugar. Seal bag and shake until well coated.
6. Spread on waxed paper to cool.
7. Store in airtight container in refrigerator.



Recipe submitted by Kristine Scarrow

Handprint Snowman **Ornaments**

These ornaments are easy and fun to make!

You will need:

- a solid coloured round ornament (I like blue because it looks like sky, but any colour would work)
- white non-toxic paint
- a paint brush
- Sharpie permanent markers in black, orange, and whatever colours you like for scarves



To make the ornament:

- Practice having your child wrap their hand around the bottom of the ornament so they know what to expect. Place the ornament in their palm and wrap each little finger straight up.
- Paint the child's hand and place on the ornament.
- Let the paint dry
- Use Sharpies to add details as you like

Name That *Christmas Carol*

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Bleached Yule | 11. Nocturnal Noiselessness |
| 2. Castaneous-coloured Seed Vesicated in a Conflagration | 12. Jehovah Deactivate Blithe Chevaliers |
| 3. Singular Yearning for the Twin Anterior Incisors | 13. Red Man En Route to Borough |
| 4. Righteous Darkness | 14. Frozen Precipitation Commence |
| 5. Arrival Time 2400 hrs. – Weather Cloudless | 15. Proceed and Enlighten on the Pinnacle |
| 6. Loyal Followers Advance | 16. The Quadruped with the Vermillion Proboscis |
| 7. Far Off in a Feeder | 17. Query Regarding Identity of Descendant |
| 8. Array the Corridor | 18. Delight for this Planet |
| 9. Bantam Male Percussionist | 19. Give Attention to the Melodious Celestial Beings |
| 10. Monarchical Triad | 20. The Dozen Festive 24 Hour Intervals |

Answers: 1. White Christmas. 2. Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire. 3. All I Want for Christmas is my Two Front Teeth. 4. O Holy Night. 5. It Came Upon a Midnight Clear. 6. O Come, All Ye Faithful. 7. Away in a Manger. 8. Deck the Halls. 9. Little Drummer Boy. 10. We Three Kings. 11. Silent Night. 12. God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen. 13. Santa Claus is Coming to Town. 14. Let it Snow. 15. Go, Tell It on the Mountain. 16. Rudolph, the Red-nosed Reindeer. 17. What Child is This? 18. Joy to the World. 19. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing. 20. The Twelve Days of Christmas.



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