



Winter 2021

Whew – 2021. We’ve made it here. You’ve made it here. I know that this last year has been a difficult one for all of us in many ways. Perhaps you’ve experienced family-related stress, job-related stress, or health-related stress, or maybe even all three. This year has been a lot. I am reminding myself of a few very simple things as we enter into the new year...

1. We are here. May we be as present as we can be in the moments we are given. May we take that walk, play that game, and practice engaging in the “here” in ways that bring us breath and life and joy.
2. There will always be good things coming. Some are the routine, the mundane, even the boring, and it is nice to find some relief in even those. There will continue to be birthdays, changes of seasons, and new days. We have learned not to hold too tightly to our best laid plans, but also that there can be new gifts within the changes we must make to adapt.
3. We are all connected. Our fellow humans, the plants, animals, ground...together

we care for and help one another to keep on. We take our turns being the supporter and the supported. I hope that you have had the opportunity to feel both. Maybe right now will be a good moment to acknowledge some of your supporters, human and non-human, who have been with you through this journey of 2020 and will continue to be by your side in the coming year. I am grateful for them.

What are a few of the good things coming your way in 2021? Who have you been supporting this past year? Who or what has been supporting you? I’d love to hear your answers if you have time to drop me a note at christy@wisapsp.org or give me a call at 608-519-8057. I love hearing from you all, as each conversation is a reminder to me of our connectedness as well.

We have some really fun plans and hopes for the coming year here from Wisconsin Adoption & Permanency Support. What I continue to hear from our staff is their desire to see you, to hear you, and to be with you in person – you truly have been missed, and there are some

really exciting things on the horizon. No matter what, we will continue to be here to provide you with supportive connections, resources, and opportunities to continue your learning. The webinars (both live and recorded) have been phenomenal with some really wonderful local speakers, and you can register for those, as well as virtual groups and other events at wisapsp.eventbrite.com. I encourage you to look into our ongoing virtual groups for a really great way to stay connected with a few people in the coming year, and watch for the continued unique events happening near you. We hope to see you very soon.

Continue to take care –
To a new year,
Christy Reppe
Adoption & Permanency
Support Coordinator



In Case You Missed It...



Family photos were taken at a recent WISAPSP activity. Check out the above photo of the Anderson family. The Anderson's attended the La Crosse Family Photo Event. Thanks to Bekky Murphy of Ladybug Photography. It was a wonderful event and many families were able to have their families photographed and provided with a digital image. Looks like a possible Christmas Card photo to me!

On November 10th, Milwaukee area kids were given the opportunity to gather at the Urban Ecology Center and venture into the trees to discover nature's patterns on leaves and become inspired to make their own unique art. They learned the basics of tree identification and then tested their skills in the forest.

Check out the boy pictured right. He was able to fill his bag with items he found and enjoyed arranging them in an artful way to take home. He had a blast learning about everything he collected!



Another couple of kids pictured out on their hike.

Their mom, Alison stated, *"Thank you so much for the amazing day. Rain never scares us, lol. We had the place almost to ourselves (no social distancing difficulties) and had a great time. Max even started up a conversation in the big cat building and got us a personal tour from a volunteer worker for almost an hour! Before tucking the kids in to bed tonight, both of the kids said it was the best day of school yet."*

We never would have had this opportunity without this group. Thank you so much.

I look forward to the upcoming events."



Thanks Alison, we look forward to hosting more events too and hope that more families will continue to join us! Be sure to check out the upcoming activities in this newsletter.

On Wednesday, November 4th, parents joined WISAPSP for a



Parent's Night Out at Swanstone Gardens in Green Bay. Parents were served dinner and then, with an artist's direction, made their own Christmas gnomes! The

gnomes turned out adorable! The attendees had a fantastic time... thank you to everyone that was able to make it!



Thank you so much for today. Just spending time with you and April made my week. I appreciated all your advice and support.

Sincerely, Molly

A WISAPSP Program Participant

Don't Worry...There's New Activities Coming Up!

Meet the Staff - Susan McParker



Get to know our La Crosse area Specialist...Susan McParker

Hi, this is Susan, the support specialist in the La Crosse area. I have enjoyed this role for almost a year and a half. I enjoy connecting with and supporting the WISAPSP community. Here is a little bit about me...

How many states have you lived in?

I've lived in Iowa, Michigan, Oregon and Wisconsin, and Australia for 1 semester.

What was your first job?

I delivered newspapers after school with my older sister while I was in elementary school.

Have you ever had a moment of glory?

I got to participate in the Olympic Torch relay heading to the 1996 Summer Olympics as the torch passed through Iowa.

What are you reading right now? Watching?

I am listening to *The Power of Showing Up* by Dan Siegel & Tina Payne Bryson, and watching *This is US*.

Favorite place you've ever visited?

I spent a semester in Newcastle, Australia in 2000 and loved seeing all the unique animals.

Do you have a pet, and how if so how did you choose its name?

We have one cat named Mira because when we first got her she had really big eyes and in Spanish Mira means to look.

Favorite part of my job?

Creating opportunities for families to spend time together and with other adoptive, guardianship and foster families.



SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendars for Saturday, October 30, 2021. On Halloween weekend, A Place In My Heart Conference will be back at The Wilderness in Wisconsin Dells! This is a full day adoption-focused conference, so continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. Speaker information and registration link coming soon, but plan now for someone to take the kids to the on-site waterpark!

Get connected! Call or text us 24/7 at

1-833-WIS-APSP

Winter Family Fun Contest

What has your family been up to this winter? Please send a photo of your family enjoying time together by January 31, 2021. A family from each region will be selected on February 1, 2021 to win a \$20 gift card to Target. The photos may be used in future WISAPSP newsletters and Facebook posts but this is not a requirement to win the contest. Please email your name, county, and photo to judi@wisapsp.org and include one of these statements in your email.

- I give permission for WISAPSP to use my photo.
- I do not give permission for WISAPSP to use my photo.



Family Fun Winter Activity

Parent - Child Snow Shoeing? Why Not?

Recently I had the chance to ask several members of our WISAPSP Virtual Support Group to share one of their favorite childhood memories. I could hear that their memories shared some common threads. Being out-of-doors, being physically active, and spending happy times with their families. Researchers have learned exposure to the natural environment and play can have a real impact when healing trauma for children and adults. Play includes whole-body movement and naturally integrates all the senses; ("experiential learning"). A great deal of recent research shows experiential learning is the way young children learn best! Could being out-of-doors and active be a contributing factor to my support group's very positive and lasting memories? This winter, snowshoeing with your children might check off all the boxes for fun and learning while strengthening family connections!

Whether your family enjoys the scent of pine boughs, observing the sparkle of newly fallen snow, tasting snowflakes, hearing the crunch of snowshoes, or feeling the cold air on their skin, these are all rich sensory experiences. Even better, if you can walk, you can snowshoe! This is a low anxiety activity for your family, and there is no need for helmets when a cushiony blanket of Snowflakes surrounds you. Add in some play with the perfect opportunity to make snow

angels along the way!

Snowshoeing is a self-paced activity that can be done in your backyard, an urban park, or local hiking trails. The payoff is the pure bliss of uncrowded beauty and natural social distancing!

So how do snowshoes work? A snowshoe creates a phenomenon called "flotation" by distributing the person's weight over a larger area so that the person's foot does not sink completely into the snow. The crisscross pattern of latticework on the snowshoes keeps them light and prevents the accumulation of weighty snow. Snowshoes are designed to move forward, not backward; instead of backing up, perhaps show your children how to make a u-turn. You can even practice making letters in the snow! Practicing on grass is a great way to get started. Try this to help your children learn more about the mechanics of snowshoeing...look up pictures of the "Artic Snowshoe Hare" with your children and have your children look closely at the hares back feet. (They literally have natural snowshoes for hind feet). You don't have to worry that your kids didn't start snowshoeing at a young age. If they can walk, they can snowshoe!

Offering an opportunity to "play" in the snow may heighten your



children's enthusiasm to leave behind electronic devices. Getting in some cardio exercise and building family bonds is a bonus. Inclusion means finding ways to include all children. If your children have special needs and snowshoeing may not be an option, here is a sled (pictured below) that can be pushed in the front of you while snowshoeing. Keeping children fully included in the adventure is what matters! [Click here for online shopping.](#)



Here's a fun idea; you can make snowshoe ornaments with your children to commemorate your family outing! [Check out ornament instructions.](#)

With so many upsides to snowshoeing, I hope this article will inspire your family to step out this winter on snowshoes! Please consider sending your snowshoeing family photos to info@wisapsp.org. We would love to hear all about your snowshoeing adventures!

Article submitted by Pattie Godsell, a WISAPSP staff member in our Milwaukee area office.



How Can I Empower Children With Two Families To Embrace Their Own Identity?



Foster and adoptive families are far from the traditional family unit in many ways. The biggest difference is that our children come from two families. How do we help them embrace their own identity as they grow into adulthood?

We are a multiracial, multigenerational, multicultural family. We have our own identity as a family, and it is unique to us. It includes the things we laugh at, the movies we watch, our traditions, and our inside jokes. It includes a set of values and expectations we live by. This is a very important part of our identity, but it is not our entire identity.

In any family, two separate units join under one roof. In an adoptive family, each person brings a little piece of something else to the table. In our home, we are African, Scottish, Irish, German, and Italian. We have lived in trailers, apartments, large homes, and tiny homes. We have lived in rural areas, urban areas, and suburban areas. When we come together, each person brings his or her own history. Our identity is a compilation of all that makes us who we are. It is the label we put

on ourselves.

All children are trying to find their place in the world. It is in our DNA to discover who we really are. For children who are adopted, the possibilities for identity are endless. All people tug and push and pull at the things that define us throughout life. My identity is different than it was when I was twenty, and it is different from when I was ten. Parents can support children as they find and embrace their own identities. We can empower them to see value in themselves in all circumstances. Here's how:

1. *Ask.* We empower our children by asking questions that help them think on their own. A simple question, such as "What do you think about that?" allows our children to value their own opinion. Asking "Why do you think that?" helps your child stretch their ability to think through things.
2. *Listen.* Listen to the answer even if it is not exactly what you want to hear. Listen even if it's not exactly who you are. If your child embraces the culture of their birth, listen. If they are walking, talking,

dressing, or thinking like a group of people they identify with, listen. Be open as they find where they fit in.

3. *Offer exposure to like-minded people.* Especially in transracial adoptive families, exposure to people who are similar to our children is vital. Our children should see themselves reflected in the people around them. We can help by exposing our children to people who look and talk like them. If your child speaks a different first language, provide a place for them to use the language of their birth. If your child is from a rural area and you have moved to an urban area, allow your child to spend time in the country.

4. *Embrace them.* Children learn self-empowerment when the adults in their lives embrace them. If the child loves science, embrace that. If the child is a social butterfly, embrace that. Let your child know you delight in them no matter what. Assure your child that no matter where they fit in society, they will always fit in your home and your family. A solid identity comes first from a solid foundation at home.

The most important thing you can do (if you're wondering what to do now) is start! Even if this has slipped off your radar in the past, or not even shown up, that's okay. Open your heart and mind. Listen and learn. And start today

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Other articles can be found online: <https://honestlyadoption.com/how-can-i-empower-children-with-two-families-to-embrace-their-own-identity/>



Check out all of our Winter Activities. To learn more about each event or to register visit wisapsp.eventbrite.com. Below are in person events, but there are so many additional webinars and online opportunities listed in Eventbrite. Be sure to check them out! Please RSVP for ALL events as notifications of any changes or cancellations will, in most cases, be sent to registrants only.

Remember-Please follow COVID-19 safety procedures. Facemasks must continue to be worn at all personally attended events.

Community	Activity	Date	Location	Time	Cost
Bayside	Snow Daze! Snowshoeing!	Saturday, January 16	Schlitz Audobon Nature Center	1:00 pm	FREE
Holmen	Morning of Self-Care	Tuesday, January 19	Palm + Pine, Holmen	10:00 am—noon	\$10
Ontario	Family Day at Wildcat State Park: Ice Caves	Saturday, January 23	Wildcat Mountain State Park—Ontario	1:00—3:00 pm	\$5
Wausau	Family Fun Tubing	Sunday, January 24	Sylvan Hill Park	1:30—3:30 PM	\$0-3
Franklin	Snow Tubing	Wednesday, January 27	The Rock Snowpark	6:00—8:00 pm	SOLD OUT
Blue Mounds	Family Winter Hike	Sunday, January 31	Blue Mound State Park	1:00—2:00 pm	\$5
Kewaunee	Family Fun Sledding	Tuesday, February 2	Kewaunee County Winter Park	1:00—2:00 pm	\$10
Stevens Point	Winter Hike	Saturday, February 6	Schmeeckle Reserve - Stevens Point	10:00—11:30 am	FREE
Sarona	Snowshoe Hike at Hunt Hill	Saturday, February 20	Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary	1:00—3:00 pm	\$10/family
Appleton	Bowling Family Fun	Tuesday, March 2	Super Bowl - Appleton	5:30—7:30 pm	FREE
Marshfield	Coffee Meet Up	Saturday, March 27	Uptown Coffee Company	9:30 am	FREE



Have you [liked us on FACEBOOK yet](#)? If not, here are some of the items you may have missed! Contests! Yoga! Articles! Support Groups!

- [Develop a Self-Care Plan.](#)
- [Raise your hand if you're watching This Is Us on Tuesday night! What storyline are you most curious to catch up on? Join us for an Online This Is Us Discussion!](#)
- [Join us online for this gentle yoga session two weeks from tonight.](#)
- [Brand new online support group - Single adoptive or guardianship parents.](#)
- [How To Help Your Child Thrive During the Holidays with Adoption Therapist Robyn Gobbel.](#)

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Virtual Support Groups

WWW.WISAPSP.ORG



WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US FOR ONE OF OUR ONGOING VIRTUAL GROUPS THAT
MEET REGULARLY VIA ZOOM!

CLICK ON EVENT TITLES TO REGISTER OR FOR MORE DETAILS

Parents of Older Youth & Teens

Join other adoptive & guardianship caregivers with children in middle/ upper grades for a live, video check-in to socially connect and discuss topics related to adoption.

5 Dates from 12/15 - 3/9

Caregivers of Younger Children

This is a monthly support group for adoptive/kinship/guardianship caregivers of kiddos that are infants/toddlers until 5th grade!

3 Dates from 12/10 - 2/11

Birth Parent Support

An online support group for birth parents who have a child who was placed for adoption. This is a wonderful way to connect with others with a shared experience. This group is facilitated by a birth parent.

Meets every other month, 2nd Tuesday @ 6:30

Waiting to Adopt

A space for Wisconsin parents or parents-to-be that are awaiting the adoption or placement of their child to connect with one another, ask questions and to share concerns and excitement.

3 Dates from 12/14 - 4/20

Relative Caregivers

Please join us for an online group for relative caregivers across Wisconsin. We will share the daily joys and challenges of being a relative caregiver.

4 Dates from 12/17 - 3/25

Caring for the Caregiver

On 1-21-21, join other adoptive & guardianship caregivers for a live, video check-in to socially connect and discuss topics related to caring for the caregiver. This support group will be facilitated by Lydia Deering, Adoption & Permanency Support Specialist from our Eau Claire office.

Single Parent Support

An online support group for single adoptive and guardianship parents. This group will meet via Zoom on the 4th Tuesday of every month and will be facilitated by Heather Hansen. Join the conversation!

Meets every month, 4th Tues @ 6:00pm

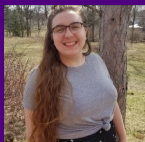





Adult Adoptees

Connect with other adult adoptees from around Wisconsin. This will be a space for discussing your adoption experiences with others who "get it", as well as for just getting to know one another and talking about life. This group is facilitated by an adult adoptee.

4 Dates from 12/9—3/10



The Wisconsin Adoption & Permanency Support Staff are available to assist you! Please feel free to contact them if you are interested in an event, have a creative event idea, or would love to learn more about local resources. They are here to serve you and your family! They would love to hear from you!

Name	Service Area	Email	Phone
 Lydia Deering	Eau Claire & Surrounding Area and Far Northern Region	lydia@wisapsp.org	608-519-8049
 Heather Hansen	Green Bay & Surrounding Area	heather@wisapsp.org	920-272-8240
 Susan McParker	La Crosse & Surrounding Area	susan@wisapsp.org	608-519-8023
 Jessica Wright	Madison & Surrounding area	jessica@wisapsp.org	608-692-2910
 Pattie Godsell	Milwaukee & Surrounding Area	pattie@wisapsp.org	414-369-7489
 Chelsey Zommers	Wausau & Surrounding Area	chelsey@wisapsp.org	608-519-8057



Giving Incredible Families Tools for Success

The GIFTS Program is our short-term, in-home support program for post-adoptive or guardianship families with a higher level of need to support permanency. It is a strengths-focused, trauma-informed program. If a family is determined to be eligible for the program, a GIFTS Case Manager will work closely with that family to assist in:

- Finding resources
- Navigating cross-system needs
- Identifying family strengths and goals
- Offering consistent support and advocacy

To find out more about the program or determine eligibility, give us a call at our toll-free number or fill out our [First Step Form](#).