



### FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD OF NORTH CENTRAL IOWA



The Bremer Cluster Foster Care Review Board meets on the first Thursday of each month in Butler County. Pictured above left to right: Melissa Appel ( 2 years), Carolyn Kielman (new), DeAnn Johnson (9 years), and Andrea Heyenga (2 months).

This fall, several long-standing members of the Bremer Board retired. Bob Greenlee, JoAnn Carey, Marilyn Teig, Jean Garaventa, and Ivan Lindloff provided great experience and insight during Board reviews, making relevant and meaningful recommendations for children and families throughout their time of service on the Board. The Iowa Child Advocacy Board thanks them for their dedication to the FCRB program!

As the Bremer Board continues to fill vacancies, new members are adding their fresh perspectives and unique insight to cases being reviewed. Currently, Board Members bring experience in education, social work, healthcare, and parenting to reviews. The two newest Board Members had this to say about joining FCRB:

“Sometimes foster care takes a bad rap and if there’s anything we can do to help improve the system and make sure these kids are loved, I’m in.” - Carolyn Kielman

“I joined because I really wanted to volunteer somewhere I could help people. With FCRB you have the opportunity to positively impact a child in need, and for that I am most grateful to have this opportunity.” - Andrea Heyenga

Despite the current vacancies, the Bremer Board continues to demonstrate compassion and respect as they serve vulnerable children and their families in Bremer, Butler, Franklin, Chickasaw, and (beginning in 2021) Floyd Counties.

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## Welcome New Volunteers!



Lamija Bashich, CASA, Johnson County  
Matt Getting, CASA, Polk County  
Stacy Hagedorn, CASA, Black Hawk County  
Haley Johnson, CASA, Black Hawk County  
Kristine Kingland, CASA, Winnebago County  
Linda Lonergan, CASA, Dubuque County  
Debra McGovern, CASA, Dubuque County  
Rochelle Pfeifer, CASA, Woodbury County  
Tara Shontz, CASA, Dallas County  
Kristen Tobias, CASA, Muscatine County

Mandy Breuklander, CASA, Warren County  
Natalie Goodman, CASA, Johnson County  
Todd Jacobus, CASA, Polk County  
Meghan Kier, CASA, Pottawattamie County  
Jill Liebe, CASA, Polk County  
Jayne McCormick, CASA, Allamakee County  
Abigail Pereboom, CASA, Polk County  
Vicki Rich, CASA, Polk County  
Justine Sponder, CASA, Woodbury County  
Melanie Walde, CASA, Polk County

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## Trainer’s Corner: Ending 2020 Focusing on Strengths



**For many of us, but certainly not all, the month of December includes holiday traditions, family gatherings, and celebration of endings and new beginnings.** During this December, as we consider the year 2020 and how we fill our final month, we are reminded that this year has brought forth times of immense struggle, a focus on painful realities, and a world filled with uncertainty of what might happen next.

As we conclude the year together, we can choose to highlight the pain and strife of 2020, or we can intentionally choose to focus on the good, the positives, the strengths. Being an advocate or board member for children who have experienced a childhood that includes abuse and neglect, we are obligated to remain focused on the positives if we are going to be effective in making recommendations for a better life, a stronger future, a world where children can thrive, because we first must 'know' that this is a possible reality.

Let's consider evaluating our lives, and the lives of others, using a strength-based lens and remember how resilient we are and will continue to be! Our mindset for 2021 can become our reality. Focus on the big picture, look for silver linings, and practice gratitude.

"Be careful what you look for and expect in life, because you will either find it or create it!

~ Christopher Babson

- What has gone well in 2020? What goals were accomplished, even in spite of a world filled with hurdles and unforeseen challenges? What small steps were made towards a larger goal?
- How have you been successful in dealing with the altered reality of 2020? How have families risen above the obstacles and worked tirelessly to maintain a family bond?
- How have your friends, relatives, or social network been supportive of you and your family's needs during 2020? Did you have a phone conversation at that exact moment you needed an empathetic ear? Or you received a bag of groceries delivered to your door? Or experience an act of kindness by a stranger?
- How has your immediate community found ways to stay connected, improve situations, and reduce obstacles? What are creative ways programs, DHS, or other agencies, have risen to the call to remain vigilant and helpful to struggling families?

Use this helpful resource, *Supporting Child, Caregiver, and Family Well-Being in Times of Crisis: Strategies to Promote Effective Virtual and Phone Engagement* to find questions that focus on family strengths organized around protective factors.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/virtualengagement.pdf>

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