

"They say an elephant never forgets. What they don't tell you is, you never forget an elephant." Bill Murray.

Fostering Connections' Newsletter, January 2025 edition

Dear Foster Carers

Happy New Year... here's to 2025 bringing you joyful moments and a sense of calm when needed.



We want to support you in making feelgood memories with your foster children.

Our quote this month is about elephants; we want to celebrate Toto, our new foster elephant. Thank you for helping us choose which one to foster. We love to engage your children and get their involvement.

Meet Toto, our elephant that your children helped us choose to foster



Fostering an elephant is a lovely idea, and suggested by one of our directors, Tina.

By fostering an orphan like Toto, we are helping to fund the specialised, round-the-clock care needed to raise orphaned wildlife and to help secure the habitats they will ultimately call home.

In time, these orphans will go on to have their own families in the wild, paving the way for generations of elephants.

We shall receive monthly email updates from Kenya, including a link to the latest Keepers' Diaries, which outline the orphans' daily adventures, and I shall share this with you in our monthly newsletters.

Please share with your children. I shall also send out an elephant project pack for them to enjoy and to find out more about elephants.



At the heart of the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's conservation activities is the Orphans' Project, which has achieved world-wide acclaim through its hugely successful elephant and rhino rescue and its rehabilitation program.

“There is no creature among all the Beasts of the world which hath so great and ample demonstration of the power and wisdom of Almighty God as the Elephant.” Edward Topsell.

Toto's Story

Toto arrived at the sanctuary with other orphaned elephants; the Keepers were surprised to see this tiny baby in tow. Toto was a few days old, and his weakened body showed that had been without milk. He tried to nurse from the females present, but to no avail.

None of the females were old enough to feed him and none of them were Toto's mother.

It is not known how he came to be in the midst of these orphans, nor how he came to lose his mother.

The Keepers think that the other elephants must have come across him alone in the bush and brought him to the place they knew to be a refuge for him.

Given his tiny size, Toto was flown to a neonatal nursery and put in a warm stable.



Tiny Toto, being protected and heled by the other orphan elephants.

More about Toto

His approximate date of birth is 25 March 2022. He was rescued on 1 April 2022

As a fragile young baby, Toto was raised as an 'only child'. Joining the other elephants took some getting used to, but now, he is well and truly one of the herd.

He is growing, understanding everything, and becoming very clever.

Toto is becoming more self-sufficient and has become great friends with Natibu and Mwinzi, the big boys who are a little older than him. He's learning a lot from them and enjoys spending all day interacting with Natibu. As calm and even keeled as Toto is, Natibu is the opposite, spirited and even a bit unpredictable, but the two get along famously.

The most incredible thing about Toto is that, during feeding time, he doesn't rush to be first. He knows his bottle is his, and that even if he's late, it will still be waiting for him. The other elephants Korbessa, Mwinzi, and Natibu race to their bottles; Toto remains calm. He is a gentle soul and has a deep trust for his keepers.

After a brief settling-in period, Mwinzi and Natibu love their big elephant stockades. They think that they have a senior privilege, whereas Toto still sleeps in the stables.

The Keepers sleep on a bunk tucked beneath a weatherproof thatched roof within easy access of the young elephants in case their help is needed in the night!



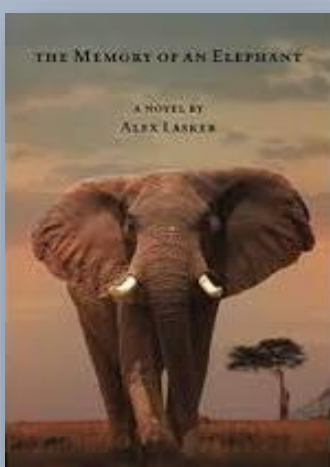
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Book Corner



I wanted to feature 2 books this month about fostering. The first being topical in the light of Fostering Connections fostering an elephant and the second is a cute children's book to help children understand foster care and adoption.

The Memory of an Elephant by Alex Lasker



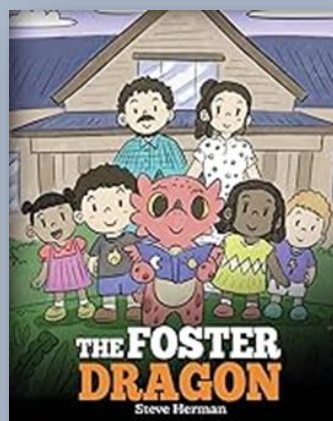
This novel is told by an aging African elephant who travels to Kenya, as he makes a last, perilous journey to find the humans who rescued him as an orphan some fifty years ago, as a child.

The story is told from the elephant's perspective and is interwoven with the lives of the family who raised him. The book is set in East Africa, Great Britain, and New York from 1962 to 2015

It covers the tumultuous lives of the family who raised and then lost him: a famed hunting guide and his wife, who runs an animal orphanage (a conflict that in time upends their marriage); their son and daughter; and the young Kikuyu who finds the orphaned elephant and becomes part of the Hathaway family.

This timeless story is alternately heartwarming and heartbreaking, spanning east Africa, Great Britain and New York from 1962 to 2015.

The Foster Dragon by Steve Herman



Drew and his dragon Diggory Doo is an uplifting story of what it means to be a foster child and the many issues, questions, and feelings they have that are directly or indirectly affected by foster care.

This is a delightful and relatable story about Dragon Diggory Doo, who is going through the same issues children have. This book can help children to cope with difficult challenges such as changing families, being removed from a home, or how scary things can be, and how to navigate the fears and feelings going into foster care.

Foster parents may find this book a great tool to help children open up to discuss different behaviours. It can also be a useful tool in gaining trust for adults involved in the fostering system such as social workers, parents, and therapists. This book is an aid to showing foster children that they are loved and that the adults involved are offering them helping hands!

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Don't ever forget

We know we have told you many times, but it is important, we feel to always remind you what a wonderful role you have chosen; becoming foster parents. So we want to remind you at the beginning of a new year, something written in a previous newsletter from Josh Shipp, a former at-risk foster child who became a Harvard graduate, bestselling author, and education speaker.

Josh wrote...

“After a while, I realized for the first time my current foster parents weren't turning me away, and they genuinely cared about my future. Even then, I didn't thank my foster parents until I was in my twenties. Know that you ARE making a difference. It's just that, sometimes, us kids are too immature or scared to tell you so.”

You are helping your young people... don't forget that; even though sometimes you may feel worn out and overwhelmed; you do an amazing job.



As Josh says, they may be too immature or too scared to understand. One day you may get the biggest thank you ever!



Our young people's achievements

Well done on your excellent table manners, L and for being invited to afternoon tea with the headmistress for your great schoolwork.

We were so proud to hear that you were invited to afternoon tea with the headmistress for your excellent schoolwork, B. Well done!

We were so proud to hear that you were invited to afternoon tea with the headmistress for your excellent schoolwork. Well done S.

And a shout out to 2 of our foster carers

Two of our foster carers received this compliment from their local authority social worker.

“It was such a pleasure to meet you last Friday and I am happy that things are improving at home with A. It is such a massive improvement, and A must indeed be proud that they are now showering independently and allowing their hair to be washed. Great work from you both. This is the kind of progress we expect from our children in care.

Many thanks for your patience and resilience.”

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Congratulations to D, who had his poem printed in the poetry book ‘Through their Eyes’

This is what his school wrote

We are “absolutely delighted to announce that our talented young poets have made their mark in the Young Writers Poetry Competition, themed '**Through their Eyes**'. This competition encouraged students to explore and express the world from the unique perspective of someone or something else, unveiling emotions and experiences often hidden from view. The results have been nothing short of inspiring—our students have produced heartfelt verses that resonate deeply and provoke thought.



Thank you to his foster carer J for letting us know and sharing D’s achievement on our Village WhatsApp group.

We are proud of you all... 🙌🙌🙌

If you would like to share any photos, milestones or achievements with us to put in our newsletter, please either share on The Village WhatsApp, email us or let one of our social workers know, when they or the team check in with you.

You or one of your children may like to write a poem, maybe about the world of fostering. We would love to hear from you.

Training

We would like to say thank you to those of you who have renewed your training recently. We have uploaded your certificates to your profile.

A reminder of 2 new courses available to you, should you wish to take them.

- **Teenagers and the Impact of Screentime**
- **Effects of Pornography on the Young Mind**

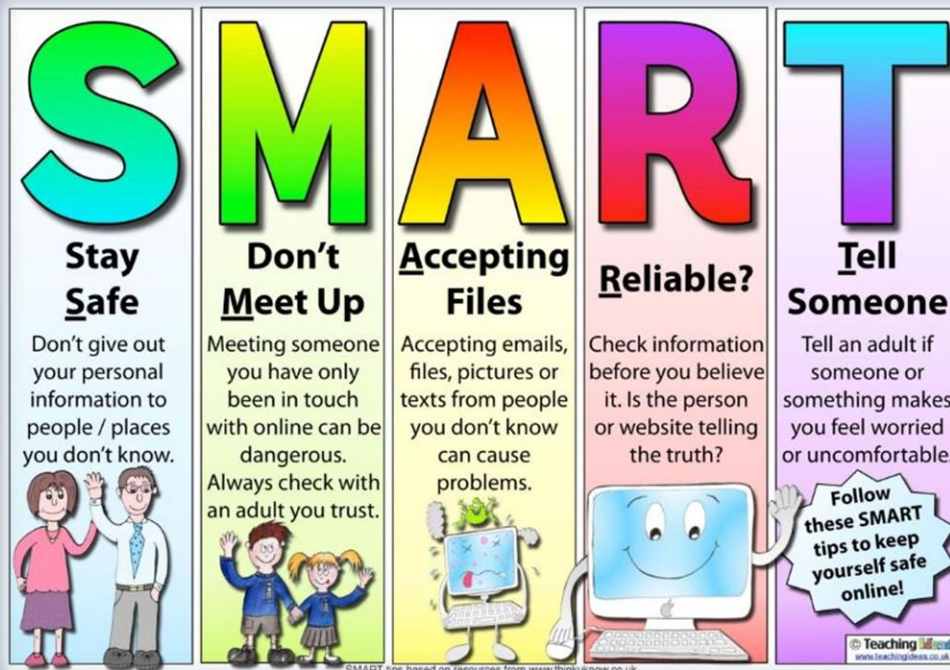
The **PACE Training** this month was a great success. Many of you joined this online training with a specialised trainer.

We shall add your certificate to your profile

“Thank you for the training today. It really resonated with the two boys I have.”

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Keeping children safe online



A good visual aid for your children. This is so important these days!

Resolutions for 2025?

I asked our team if they had any! A couple of comments from them:

"Absolutely no!"

"Whenever things get tough or I'm feeling frustrated, I won't dwell on it. Instead, I'll put on my favourite song, turn up the volume, and dance out the negativity."



Here's to making new memories in 2025 and we shall be by your side every step of the way!

**A gentle reminder to please send back the questionnaire that you received in the post.
Thank you**

**Always here for you
The Fostering Connections' Team**