

Fostering Connections' Newsletter, September 2025 edition

Dear Foster Carers


Welcome to our September newsletter. Our quote this month is from "To Autumn", by English Romantic poet John Keats. It is his final work in a group of poems known as his "1819 odes".

To Autumn

I.

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

He composed "To Autumn" after a walk near Winchester one autumnal evening. The work marks the end of his poetic career, as he needed to earn money and could no longer devote himself to the lifestyle of a poet. A little over a year after the publication of "To Autumn", Keats died in Rome.

We would like your children to write a poem about autumn or a picture for the younger ones. We shall combine this with our annual Halloween event. So, get your household creative 



One of our previous year's entries.

Back to school

We hope you liked your back-to-school gift from us... thank you for your lovely comments.

"The candle smells divine."


You can't beat a White Company candle.



Thank you for the photo, Jacqui.

A started his new school and Alison shared how his first day went:

"Momentous day 1st day at reception, the boy super confident, me not so! Straight in no fuss found his peg, looked around the classroom and sat down at a desk, 'this will do nicely' he said, 'you can go now' So I did as I was told!"

"The first day at big school went well A said he wants to go 'every day'. When I asked him... what is his teachers name and he said, 'Miss Hedgehog silly!' because he is in Hedgehog class!" 

Tina, our Director of Children's Services commented

"Clearly, well done, what a journey to get him to this point.

A huge thank you to all of you... new schools, new class years, new colleges; we don't underestimate the sheer hard work and skilled parenting... summer holidays successful and education in hand... Brilliant

Candle on, cup of coffee and breathe, thank you"  

"It was one of those perfect English autumnal days which occur more frequently in memory than in life." P.D. James,



An update from The Sheldrick Trust and our foster elephant, Toto

As well as sharing tales of Toto in our newsletter, we thought we would share some other posts from The Sheldrick Trust this month.

An Interview with Pythias Matuku, driver and guide



Pythias, tell us how long have you been working with the Trust and what your role is?

I've been with the Trust for three years now, working as a driver/guide. It's quite varied work — I drive for different objectives. Sometimes I'm supplying what's needed in various areas, other times I'm handling different deliveries. I also guide guests who are staying in our Eco Lodges.

What does your work involve day-to-day?

When I am not out on a driving mission, I might be delivering supplies to teams or transferring greens to wildlife during the dry season. One week I could be at Ithumba, the next I'm around our Kaluku Field Headquarters — it keeps things interesting. I have also trained as a guide in Tsavo and in the various national parks as well.

In all your training, you have seen many of Kenya's parks. Do you have a favourite place to work?

My favourite is definitely Tsavo. It is not crowded and in every season it's very nice. Everything is big here; there's lots of area and lots and lots of wildlife. It's a lovely place to drive around.

What's it like driving in Tsavo — do you encounter much wildlife?

All the time! When I'm driving, I see all kinds of animals, from big herds of elephants to lions who have just had a kill or even 100 buffalo causing a traffic jam! Where is home for you?

I'm from South Kitui, up by the northern boundary of Tsavo East National Park.

Has your community had any experience with the Trust?

The Trust does a tremendous amount for my community. One of the most important areas of support is supplying daily meals for schools and preventing human-wildlife conflict.

How have attitudes towards elephants changed in your area?

The Trust has helped people understand that elephants are good for us and good for tourism. Many people rely on tourism now. Even domestic tourism has gone up — people are very interested in our country's wild places.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

I really enjoy guiding guests around and showcasing the park, and finding wildlife on my drives — elephants, lions and cheetahs. The seeking them out, that's what I love most about the job.

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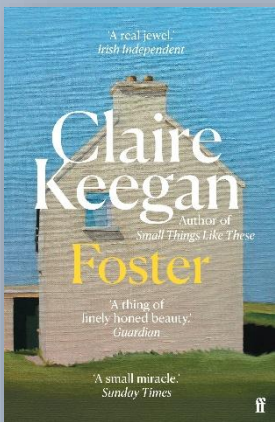


Book Corner



This month's book corner features 2 books by Irish author Claire Keegan. She was raised on a farm in Ireland. She draws from the Irish landscape and themes of family, religion, and social issues. Her works of fiction are critically acclaimed international bestsellers and have been translated into thirty languages.

Foster



A girl is sent to live with foster parents on a farm, not knowing when she will return home while her mother gives birth. In the strangers' house, she finds affection she has not known before, and slowly she begins to blossom in their care.

It was chosen by The Times as one of the top 50 works to be published in the 21st Century and is now part of the school syllabus in Ireland.

Small Things like These



Based on the real events of Ireland's [Magdalene Laundries](#). The story of coal merchant Bill Furlong, who uncovers exploitation at a convent and is faced with the decision of whether to intervene; made into a film with [Cillian Murphy](#)

Some autumn literary quotes...

Jane Austen, Persuasion

"Her pleasure in the walk must arise from the exercise and the day, from the view of the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges, and from repeating to herself some few of the thousand poetical descriptions extant of autumn - that season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness - that season which has drawn from every poet worthy of being read some attempt at description, or some lines of feeling."

Donna Tartt, The Secret History

"Even now I remember those pictures, like pictures in a storybook one loved as a child. Radiant meadows, mountains vaporous in the trembling distance; leaves ankle-deep on a gusty autumn road; bonfires and fog in the valleys; cellos, dark windowpanes, snow."

Diana Gabaldon, Outlander

"It was a beautiful bright autumn day, with air like cider and a sky so blue you could drown in it."

Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451

"The autumn leaves blew over the moonlit pavement in such a way as to make the girl who was moving there seem fixed to a sliding walk, letting the motion of the wind and the leaves carry her forward. The trees overhead made a great sound of letting down their dry rain."

I would love to write like this... there is a book in all of us... evidently!

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News from our Team

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

September is Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Month, which culminated in [International FASD Day](#) on September 9th. The month was dedicated to educating the public about FASD and the importance of avoiding alcohol during pregnancy to prevent this lifelong condition.

The aim is to promote a greater understanding of FASD and encourage support for pregnant women to remain alcohol-free.



Wendy, our Agency Decision Maker has written a piece on the subject

In 2018, after many years of fostering and social work, I helped to establish a charity with some very skilled workers who founded the work.

Foster carers who had cared for children with FASD and they had fought many years to get this recognised and understand it more themselves.

They now work with health professionals, carers, adopters, parents, young people and continue to support them and raise awareness. Many do not understand the

impact of drinking when preparing to have a baby and during pregnancy.



The FASD Alliance, which they are part of, helps many people.

See FASD websites for videos, info and free webinars on a monthly basis.

<https://www.fasdawareness.org.uk/>

Thank you, Wendy

And... remember if things get too much



Focus on what you can do, accept what is outside your control, and direct your energy to getting enough sleep, to promote peace and progress.

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Children of Foster Carers' Week 13 to 19 October

This is The Fostering Network's annual campaign to celebrate the vital contribution the children of foster carers make to foster care.



Each October, fostering services across the UK run events and activities to recognise and reward the children of foster carers for the important role they play in their home, making foster children feel happier, welcome, safer and more loved.

Benefits of Children of Foster Carers' Week

The week allows our Fostering Connections Team to show our appreciation to your young people who welcome your foster children into their home.

We want to listen to your birth children and hear what they have to say about their experience of being part of a family that fosters.

It would be lovely to hear their comments and stories about how they have found their fostering journey. Please share with us. Maybe your children read our newsletters, or perhaps you can ask them to send us something

We want to send them a little gift of appreciation and a thank you letter for all they do and to let them know that they're appreciated.



Please contact Fiona,
fionamartin@fostering-connections.com

"It takes a village to raise a child..." – and your birth children are part of that village.

"It was one of those perfect English autumnal days which occur more frequently in memory than in life." P.D. James,



Training

We hope that those who were able to attend PACE training 2 found it useful.

Thank you for your comments...

Jackie one of our foster carers of 25 years said, *"It was good to learn that you don't have to 'fix' everything and that it's ok for the YP to be where they are and to acknowledge that."*

Lylah, one of our new foster carers said she learned that when a child is dysregulated you can't distract them out of it and that you have to acknowledge and validate their feelings and where they are at that moment. She was able to reflect on behaviours with her foster child. She really valued the input from other carers and that they understood how she felt during the difficult times. She thoroughly enjoyed the virtual training and is keen to do more.

Vanessa, one of our SWs thought the training was excellent.

Alison and Pete, our foster carers of 35 years really enjoyed the training and said it was great to reflect

Sam Lanaway, our foster carer of 2 years said the training was delivered really well. She also enjoyed the interaction between carers and staff

We have added several new courses

- Managing Allegations
- The Importance of Log Keeping
- Neurodiversity
- ODD: Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- Screen time and Cyber Bullying
- Signs of Grooming
- Teenage Brain Development
- Contextual Safeguarding
- Supporting Young People with Trauma and Loss

These will be delivered virtually.

These are as well as our mandatory training.

1 virtual training course in October

- Log Keeping training on 21 October. Please note the change of date.

This will be an extremely useful workshop for new foster carers and a refresh for others.

New foster carers will find the information shared by our experienced carers invaluable.

Please email Nicole to book: nicole@fostering-connections.com

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Our young people's achievements and news

Well done to all our young people who have started new schools, colleges or school for the first time.

K - we were so pleased to hear of your school achievement points for ambition and pride.

B - Well done for your positive dojo from school.

We are proud of you all.



Wayne's Christmas Workshop

Wayne is running another one of his amazing Christmas Wreath Workshops for us on 2nd December. Please let Fiona know if you would like to take part.




Children's Questionnaires

Thank you to those who have sent these back... we find our young people's ideas and comments so useful.

We shall be sharing this information soon.

And to finish with words from George Eliot from a letter she wrote in 1841 to her friend Maria Lewis

 *"Is not this a true autumn day? Just the still melancholy that I love—that makes life and nature harmonize. The birds are consulting about their migrations, the trees are putting on the hectic or the pallid hues of decay, and begin to strew the ground, that one's very footsteps may not disturb the repose of earth and air, while they give us a scent that is a perfect anodyne to the restless spirit."*

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.



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