

Foster Care in WM: Multiple Opportunities to Make a Difference.



Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley



In support of the mission of Zonta International to build a better world for women and girls, the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley has worked on numerous initiatives in its 33 year history. Some of the projects include mentoring women veterans who are rebuilding their lives at the Soldier On Program in Leeds; collecting and filling handbags with personal items needed by women living in shelters and on the streets; donating hundreds of toys and books to local nonprofits for distribution to children who may not otherwise receive personal gifts; and partnering with like-minded local non-profits to empower women and youth to push aside barriers on the path to achieving their full potential.

The club conducts three fundraising events each year: a golf tournament in September, a poinsettia sale in November, and a calendar raffle in May. Two-thirds of the profits from these events support our local service projects and scholarship awards: one-third is donated to the Zonta Foundation for Women which supports projects and programs around the world.

We need everyone's voice in our relentless advance for women's equality, education, and an end to child marriage and violence against women.

Ask a Zontian how you can help.

www.zontaqv.org ~ www.facebook.com/ZontaQuaboagValley



Foster Care in Western MA: Hard Truths, Multiple Opportunities

Youth in foster care experience significant barriers as it relates to their physical, mental and emotional well-being. The impact of these barriers has been proven to hurt their ability to achieve adult self-sufficiency.



February 12, 2024

Ludlow Country Club

1 Tony Lema Drive, Ludlow, MA



Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley

District I Area II 1991 – 2024

ZontaQV.org



Facilitator: Andrea L. Bordenca wears many hats in her professional life - CEO of DESCO Service, Managing Partner of Generative Leadership Consulting, Founder of Lead Yourself Youth, Principal of Venture Way Collaborative, and co-founder of the Women's Collaborative, to name a few. Her focus in helping women & non-binary leaders is to set boundaries while elevating their team. With youth and educators, she strives to break the self-limiting barriers that are common within adolescent development in order to set them up for being the best version of themselves.



Panelist: Daisy Acosta has been with the Department of Children and Families for over 15 years. Her roles have included Ongoing Social Worker, Response/Hotline social worker, Kinship Resource Social Worker and currently Social Worker/Foster Care Recruiter. Her function is to increase family resources to match placement needs by Area and Region. As a recruiter she facilitates recruitment activities and events to inform and recruit potential resources and provide support through the foster parent assessment phase. Daisy hosts a weekly virtual information session Mondays at 5:30. .



Panelist: Stefany Schaefer is a passionate Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and dedicated paralegal with over eight years of experience in the Family and Supreme Court system. Her commitment to advocating for vulnerable children emerged during her volunteer tenure with CASA of NYC. Stefany has continued her volunteer work with CASA of Hampden County, Massachusetts, actively participating in judicial proceedings to ensure the best interests of children in the foster care system. She also leads a Book Club for volunteers with discussions connected to their impactful work. .



Panelist: Lashanda Stone, MSW has been with the Department of Children and Families over 24 years in a number of roles—currently as coordinator for the Volunteer Foster Case Review Program. This Unit makes decisions regarding children who are placed in foster care for six months or longer, assessing how well their needs are being met and what progress has been made toward establishing them in a permanent living situation. A Volunteer from the Community is one member of the 3-person panels that make these decisions. The need for the communities' engagement in helping the Department make decisions on behalf of children in care is ever-present.

Program

Welcome and Introductions

Karen and Chris Keough-Huff, Co-Presidents

Dinner

Together, now, we voice our thanks
 For life, for food, for loving care,
 We also honor Zonta's code
 Through fellowship and all we share.
 Zontians work for lasting peace,
 For every nation, everywhere.

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*Table conversations: Please share personal connections to the foster care system and develop questions you would like answered.*

## Panel of Experts on Foster Care in W.M.

**Andrea Bordenca, Moderator**

**Lashanda Stone**, Dept of Children and Family Services (DCF)

**Stephany Schafer**, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

**Daisy Acosta**, Volunteer Case Review Coordinator

**Review of Opportunities to Make a Difference**

**Plan of Action for Next Steps**

### Closing Remarks

Invitation to join us at upcoming meetings.