

# Cans for Kids

Public Relations Campaign

fostering  
together

 olympus PR

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## Opportunity Statement

Fostering Together has an opportunity to develop new messaging strategies and tactics in order to reach new audiences and raise more awareness about how people can contribute to the foster care system. Up to this point, Fostering Together's messaging has focused a lot on informing people via words and statistics, meaning there is great opportunity for engagement through more visual and emotional appeals. Lengthy messages with many statistics can often overwhelm recipients, which is especially concerning when the issue involves the already overwhelming topic of foster care and foster children. When messaging is presented ineffectively or distributed inadequately to community members, Fostering Together's overall mission is ignored or unheard. We don't want such a passionate organization to hit roadblocks because of messaging. In addition, much of the conversation about fostering focuses on why individuals *cannot* foster versus why they *can*. Therefore, we also see an opportunity to change the narrative and position Fostering Together as leaders in the fostering community.

## Situation Analysis

According to Fostering Together's website, the organization was born out of a partnership between the State of Washington and Olive Crest, "a national leader in transforming the lives of at-risk children." In addition, the nonprofit receives support from other foster care related organizations, such as Child Care Aware, Child Care Check, Bikers Against Child Abuse, Children's Alliance, Sibling House and Embrace Washington.

Fostering Together's main competition is other foster care organizations in Washington State. Fostering Together's website cites competitive examples such as Treehouse and the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), which is considered to be the leading agency for "state-funded services that support children and families." Other examples of competition include the Community & Family Services Foundation, AdoptUsKids and A Family For Every Child, all of which have similar goals and services to Fostering Together. Thus, because all of these organizations are all trying to achieve similar goals, they aren't typical "competitors."

Media coverage of the foster care system is generally unfavorable. The most recent foster care headlines in *The New York Times* highlights a general theme of a broken system with a lack of funding and resources. According to Fostering Together, it is also important to consider the influence of Governor Jay Inslee, who actually created DCYF to reform "how the state serves at-risk children and youth, with the goal of producing better outcomes in all Washington communities."

Based on a survey conducted by Olympus PR, the general opinion about foster care is not positive. Every respondent, when asked about their general opinion of the foster care system, either had no opinion or had something negative to say. Responses included: "Poor communication between parties and lack of information being provided to foster parents," "It's broken," "Challenged by lack of funds and qualified foster families," "I don't know anything about fostering," and "Not enough caring homes."

For current foster parents, Fostering Together is well-known for being affordable and dedicated to finding and supporting foster families in Washington. Based on the survey conducted by Olympus PR, the number of respondents who would recommend Fostering Together to others was higher compared to those who have actually heard of Fostering Together. In this same survey, most people who are looking into fostering or have awareness of foster care responded that they feel more influenced by professionals in regards to their decision making. Therefore, Fostering Together really has an opportunity to establish a concrete position as the bridge between foster youths and forever homes.

Currently, Fostering Together's messaging is lengthy and ineffective. They cite Facebook advertisements as successful and billboards as unsuccessful. There is an app, but it is not as advertised as their other social media (which is run by Leeann Marshel, their primary media contact). According to a survey conducted by Olympus PR, the most popular sources for information are professionals/experts in the field, family and friends, and news outlets/media. In the middle are scholarly articles/journals, online blogs, print media, and previous experiences, while the least popular are influencers and pastors.

According to Fostering Together, in terms of internal communications, Fostering Together has the FIRST Program, which is a committee that provides "neutral third party advice and support to foster parents," including information regarding policies, procedures and resources. Before decisions are made, especially regarding advertisements and marketing, Fostering Together must go through an additional approval process through the DYCF since they receive funding from the state.

## Goal

For hesitant groups to realize ways in which they *can* contribute to the foster care system.

## Audience Profiles

**1. Meet Robert**, a 56-year-old *empty nester with resources* living in SW Washington. He is married to Debbie and they have two children together who have just recently left the house to attend college. Due to Robert's experience with raising children, he is more likely to have the resources and space to house and care for children within the foster system. There are a number of barriers that Robert and his spouse face when considering becoming licensed to foster. According to the Insured Retirement Institute, Robert, along with over 20% of his fellow empty nesters, state that they want a smaller home. Additionally, over 60% claim that they are looking for a home that requires less maintenance. Robert worries that if he were to downsize he might not have adequate space to foster children. Robert and Debbie, along with other empty nesters, have expressed their apprehension towards running out of money within 10-20 years of retirement along with being unable to meet the basic needs such as rent, food, and health care. This is yet another barrier that Robert is struggling with when deciding if fostering children is the right path for their family. Even though foster parents receive some assistance from the government, they are not made aware of this information and are left to believe that all the financial responsibility of caring for a foster child lies in their hands. Robert and Debbie tend to heavily rely on their peers and social groups for opinions and advice. They also comment on how influenced they are by

their community members and social group. To efficiently target Robert and Debbie it would be important to not only target them individually but also their community and peer group. This will be a more beneficial tactic in easing some of their concerns surrounding fostering and swaying empty nesters to get licensed.

**2. Meet Samantha (31) and Hector (33)**, a newly married interracial couple residing in Camas, WA. *They live a very comfortable lifestyle with well-paying jobs, are considering expanding their family and are open to all options on how to do so.* Since they've lived in Camas, the city has continued to grow with not only new neighborhoods, but also local businesses, resources, and the Camas Public School District. These are important for potential foster parents as they want to keep youth within state boundaries and relatively close to their communities to allow foster children to excel in a stable environment. Like many other people who go through major changes in their lives, Samantha and Hector are excited but may face anxiety about fostering children, as this can be a daunting process for them. Since fostering a child is not a simple process – but one that requires multiple steps, documents, and training – it may be confusing if expectations of the foster parents and social workers aren't clear. Therefore, Fostering Together can further clarify these expectations through workshops, forums, and other events before diving deeper into the process and paperwork which can help alleviate this barrier for Samantha, Hector and the child. Consistent communication and a great relationship with the social worker can really help potential foster parents like them feel more comfortable with asking questions throughout the process and provide better support for them and the foster children. When it comes to making the final decisions, individuals and couples similar to Samantha and Hector will be influenced through multiple channels and by multiple people since they are in the beginning stages. They may discuss it intimately with important family members or close friends to gather a perspective on experience, and then seek professional consultation from official foster care workers about opportunities within fostering. This is a great opportunity for organizations such as Fostering Together to position themselves in front of potential parents such as Samantha and Hector through workshops, informational events, and be the forefront of connecting resources to minimize confusion and illuminate the realistic expectations of fostering.

**3. Meet Tessa**, a 28-year-old teacher who is *unable to have biological children of her own*. A key audience for Fostering Together includes those who are unable to have biological children of their own either due to medical complications or due to their sexual orientation (LGBTQ+ community). For example, Tessa may choose to become involved in the foster care system if she feels like she wants to have the experience of raising children or the opportunity of becoming a parent. People within this demographic typically live in metro, rural and/or suburban households, are primarily between the ages of 25-44, have received a high school and/or college education, as well as retain adequate to above average financial stability. Members of this audience place a significant value on having a family, providing for their children as well as being suitable and compassionate parents. Members of the priority audience such as Tessa are also very influential in their respective communities, active on social networks and are generally tech savvy. Key influencers for Tessa include immediate family and close friends. These types of influencers are typically the first to inform and encourage Tessa and her spouse that there are great alternative ways to becoming parents. Additional outside influencers include

societal groups, television, social media, community events, and authority figures like doctors or counselors.

## Objective/Strategy/Tactic

### 1.

**Objective:** To encourage empty nesters to get licensed to help their fostering community.

**Strategy:** We will inform new empty nesters about the different avenues for getting involved within the fostering community. This will fill their void of not taking care of children while still allowing them to achieve their wants and desires.

**Tactics:**

- Holding a public forum at Hudson’s Bay High School that introduces Fostering Together and allows the community to be informed of the Cans for Kids movement. This will explain the canned food drive and allow people to ask questions about the fostering system and how they **can** help children. Leave-behinds will be provided.
  - This movement will position Fostering Together as pioneers of an “I can foster because…” movement on multiple social media platforms with the goal of reducing fostering hesitancy.
  - Will include a social media campaign called #ICanFoster, in the style of the “Humans of New York” Instagram.
  - Reach out to current foster parents like Kim Glover to obtain real testimonials about how they felt that they could help foster children.
  - Encourage people to respond with ideas about how they could also help (for example, by donating canned food).
- Utilizing Facebook to share testimonials and anecdotes from empty nesters with past fostering experience.
- Having Fostering Together attend various welcome weeks at WSU Vancouver and Clark College as empty nesters will be sending their children off to college.
- Hosting a golf tournament at Camas Meadows to provide a fun and easy way to learn about getting licensed, with proceeds and donated canned food going toward Fostering Together.
  - Begin advertising about the golf tournament on all of Fostering Together’s social media early.

### 2.

**Objective** To inform couples willing to foster about the process and alleviate any intimidating myths of becoming a foster parent.

**Strategy:** We will work alongside Fostering Together to prioritize streamlining consistent transparency of information and processes for potential foster parents.

**Tactics:**

- Pitching a story about the canned food drive and #ICanFoster movement to Columbian writer Patty Hastings with the potential headline “Canned Food Drive to Reduce Foster Care Hesitancy.”
- Hosting an engaging workshop around the fostering process between foster care workers and potential foster parents to nurture a better relationship.
- Introducing informational videos on Fostering Together’s website about the licensing process and/or what to expect during foster parent training, and how they can get involved with the foster care system. Created by Fostering Together.
- Providing leave-behinds at doctor’s offices, therapists, counselors, bookstores, local businesses, etc. throughout the process for onboarding parents to allow them to feel comfortable with the process and potentially receive helpful tips when it comes to a changing household.
- #ICanFoster campaign

### 3.

**Objective:** To inform those who are unable to have biological children of alternative ways of becoming parents through fostering or becoming a respite household.

**Strategy:** We will raise awareness through media engagement about Fostering Together and thus present fostering as a viable alternative for raising children.

**Tactics:**

- Creating posts on behalf of Fostering Together containing information about getting licensed and the need for more foster families in SW Washington. These posts will be spread across social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram.
- Tabling at locations such as farmers markets, church events, pride events and other local meetings to obtain canned food donations.
- Holding a public forum with guest speakers who can share experiences about other ways of having children.
  - Canned food donations will be encouraged.
  - Leave-behinds will be provided.
- Encouraging doctor’s offices and counseling centers to provide leave-behinds about Fostering Together for those seeking alternative ways to raise children.
- #ICanFoster campaign

### Key Messages

1. **Message:** Concerned about running out of money? Use the community resources at your disposal to help a child. Fostering Together has the resources to help you become a foster parent today.
2. **Message:** Parenting is not easy, so the process to become a foster parent should be made as simple as possible. Fostering Together is here to make the licensing process quick and understandable. Learn more at [fosteringtogether.org](http://fosteringtogether.org)

3. **Message:** Your dreams of becoming a parent aren't over yet. Fostering is one of the many routes to becoming a parent. Visit [fosteringtogether.org](http://fosteringtogether.org) to learn more.

## Timeline

1/6/2020 - 1/10/2020	Fostering Together to attend various welcome weeks at WSU Vancouver and Clark College.	Lead: Peggy Carlson
1/6/2020 - 6/27/2020	Begin advertising about "Cans for Kids" and the key event (golf tournament) on all of Fostering Together's social media.	Lead: WSU & Leeann Marshel
1/13/2020	Send leave-behinds for review process [1 week review duration].	Review: Leeann Marshel & team
1/21/2020	Provide leave-behinds to doctors' offices, therapists, counselors, bookstores, local businesses, etc.	Lead: WSU & Leann Marshel
1/27/2020	Hold a public forum at Hudson's Bay High School that introduces Fostering Together and allows the community to be informed of the Cans for Kids movement. This will also be the formal the kick-off for the #ICanFoster movement, canned food donations will be accepted and leave-behinds will be provided.	Kim Glover and Peggy Carlson, with a panel of foster parents (like Nikki Hinshaw)
2/3/2020	Introduce informational videos on Fostering Together's website about the licensing process, what to expect during foster parent training, and how they can get involved with the foster care system. These videos will be created by Fostering Together as they have the content needed for them.	Leeann Marshel
2/19/2020	Pitch a story about the canned food drive and #ICanFoster movement to Columbian writer Patty Hastings with the potential headline "Canned Food Drive to Reduce Foster Care Hesitancy."	WSU/Leeann Marshel
2/25/2020	Hold a public forum with guest speakers who can share experiences about other ways of having children. Canned food donations will be encouraged and leave-behinds will be provided.	Lead: Kim Glover
4/6/2020	Host an engaging workshop around the fostering process between foster care workers and potential foster parents to	Alternating team members and foster

	nurture a better relationship. Canned food donations will be encouraged and leave-behinds will be provided.	parent volunteers
5/23/2020	Table at locations such as <b>farmers markets</b> to raise awareness about the needs of foster children and families and obtain canned food donations. Leave-behinds will be provided for community members.	Alternating team members and foster parent volunteers
6/8/2020	Host an engaging workshop around the fostering process between foster care workers and potential foster parents to nurture a better relationship. Canned food donations will be encouraged and leave-behinds will be provided.	Alternating team members and foster parent volunteers
6/13/2020	Table at locations such as <b>Portland Pride</b> to raise awareness about the needs of foster children and families and obtain canned food donations. Leave-behinds will be provided for community members.	Alternating team members and foster parent volunteers
6/27/2020	Host a golf tournament at Camas Meadows to provide a fun and easy way to learn about getting licensed, with proceeds and canned food donations going towards Fostering Together. There will be multiple raffle prizes for canned food contributors, and Fostering Together can allocate all donated foods across their organization.	Team and foster parent volunteers

## Budget

*\*Please see the attached handout\**

## Evaluation

- Per Objective 1:** Increase amount of empty nesters getting licensed by 10%, which can be measured by utilizing data provided by the Department of Children, Youth & Families to determine the amount of baby boomers leaving and entering the foster system.
- Per Objective 2:** Distribute 1,000 physical leave-behinds in local businesses, bookstores, clinics, doctor's offices, counseling centers, etc., which will be effective if each designated spot had at least 50% of the leave-behinds picked up.
- Per Objective 3:** Hold two focus groups to determine what people think about alternative methods to having children before and after tactic rollout, which can be measured by analyzing the change in resulting feelings before and after tactic rollout.

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