



MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

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www.mfpa.net



MFPA April 2010 Newsletter

Issue 79

April 20, 2010

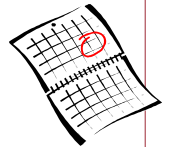
At our April Meet and Eat we enjoyed a pizza dinner and an evening with Aureya Magdalen, MFT, who works with children individually and in peer group sessions. We spent the experiential evening discovering energy in our bodies; a flux that can't be seen with our eyes but can be felt. Each of us had the opportunity to explore how our internal life force flows from the earth through our bodies to places beyond our material space. We played with our own internal system that establishes our zone of comfort with others in a way to help us in our daily encounters. We experimented with different ways to express our internal rhythm and to appreciate knowing that each of us does 'march to a different drummer'. We worked with incorporating our rhythm into a therapy for diffusing agitation and calming ourselves and others. This teaching recognized and honored all the children that we in some way guide and gave us a new set of tools for relaxation. Aureya's parting gift was a list of "21 Ways to Recognize and Support A Child's Natural Genius". Here are two: **Trust the children.** Trusted children trust themselves. If they make an error, tell them you believe in their good intentions. Spend enough time listening to know what their positive intentions are in any situation. **Tell the truth, always, no matter what!** Any truth can be adjusted to fit a child's age and maturity level. Lying models lying and hurts the heart. Learn and model loving communication. Truthfulness is liberating.

In May, we will be hosting what has become an annual Meet and Greet with foster parents and social workers. The College of Marin Foster and Kinship Care Education Program provides wonderful munchies for all to enjoy while getting to know one another. There are rumors there will be a special guest appearance by a judicial authority (hint: he was unable to make a previous speaking engagement). This is a great opportunity to get to know the social workers in a social setting. Children are welcome. See attached flyer for details.

Nominations for Carol McKenna Award

In honor of past Marin Foster Parent Association President, Carol McKenna, there will be an award presented to both a foster parent and a social worker in her honor. The Carol McKenna Unsung Hero Award will recognize the dedication and commitment of a foster parent and a social worker who has historically gone unnoticed by his/her peers and/or colleagues. The social worker will be nominated by a foster parent. The Marin Foster Parent Association will accept nominations between now and the end of the month. A social worker will be chosen from all nominations received and presented the award at the Meet and Greet scheduled for May 25th. If you have had the opportunity to work with a social worker you feel deserves to be recognized and receive this award, please submit your nomination with a paragraph or two of why you feel he/she should receive this honor either via email (giaclay@yahoo.com), fax (472-2937) or regular mail (MFPA, P.O. Box 6726, San Rafael, CA 94903) before April 30th. Social workers will be completing the same process to acknowledge a foster parent for this award as well.

Upcoming Events

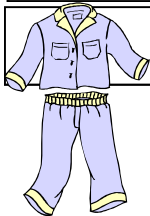


- ❖ **April 23:** Child Sexual Abuse & Attachment Disorder, San Rafael, 11:30AM—1:00 PM
 - ❖ **April 30:** Soup Group, San Rafael, 12—2 PM
 - ❖ **April 30:** First 5 Marin's 9th Annual Breakfast, San Rafael, 8:30-10AM
 - ❖ **May 6:** MFPA Executive Board meeting, San Rafael, 10AM-12PM
 - ❖ **May 8:** Marin Human Race, San Rafael, 8AM
 - ❖ **May 25:** Meet and Greet, San Rafael, 4-5:30PM
 - ❖ **June 5:** CPR and First Aid, Novato, 9-12/1-4
 - ❖ **June 18:** MFPA 8th Annual Foster Family and Social Worker Picnic, San Rafael, 12:30—3PM
 - ❖ **June 18:** Navigating The Individual Education Program (IEP), San Rafael, 11AM—12:30PM
 - ❖ **July 19-23:** Fire Squirts Camp
- For information on any of the above events, contact Carol Ihlenburg or go to our website at www.mfpa.net.

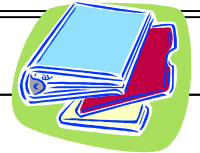
Funding for Tutoring and After School Enrichment Programs



Thanks to a grant from the Marin Charitable Association, the Marin Foster Parent Association has funding available to assist foster families with tutoring and after school enrichment costs for foster children or children in the dependency system. If you have a child who needs additional academic assistance, PLEASE APPLY FOR THIS FUNDING!! There is a cap of \$500/family per year. If, at the end of the year, there is still funding remaining, families may reapply. The goal of this grant is to provide foster children with the extra educational assistance they need to be successful in school and in life. By providing funding to cover the cost of tutoring or other educational afterschool programs for these children, they will receive the benefit of being able to excel in school while they are a part of the foster care system. Funding will be distributed to foster families through an application process. The only requirements are the request is for a foster child or child in the dependency system and the funding will benefit him/her educationally. Funding will be granted on a first come/first serve basis with a combined monthly maximum amount of \$400.00 to be distributed amongst all approved applicants. Once your application is received, it will be submitted to the MFPA board at the monthly board meeting for approval. Once approved, receipts or an invoice for the cost of services must be submitted within one month of application approval. If you are interested in applying for this funding, contact Carol Ihlenburg at 507-1822 or via email at cihlenburg@comcast.net. We are excited to offer this assistance to foster families!



MFPA Donation Closet



The Marin Foster Parent Association received donations from Sleep Train Foster Kids this month. We have coats, pajamas and school supplies available for children in foster care. Since we received so many pajamas, they are available to any child who is or has been in the dependency system. If interested in these donations, please contact Carol Ihlenburg at 507-1822.

Welcome New Foster Parent!

Marin County Children and Family Services would like to welcome and introduce our recently licensed foster parent, **Susan Nasca**. An executive with Levi Strauss, Susan lives in Mill Valley, in the charming, three-bedroom home which she built. Susan will begin by providing respite care and, in the future, her plan is to provide foster care. Currently, she is eager to offer other foster parents a break! Susan will welcome boys and girls, ages 0-18, for respite (presently licensed for one, she will soon increase her capacity to two). She is available evenings and weekends, but is open to providing respite for longer stays if the child has after school care already in place. Susan is a highly reliable, organized, capable and insightful person. An avid swimmer, Susan's other interests include playing tennis, gardening, hiking, and nesting at home. She has done an astounding amount of volunteer work, including working as a lifeguard for Guide Dogs for the Blind, and offering workshops to children aging out of the foster care system with First Place for Youth. **Susan will provide respite care purely on a voluntary basis and she looks forward to hearing from you.**

-Cindy Wasserman, MSW, Licensing Social Worker

Licensing Corner



Every month, the Marin County Children and Family Services will provide tips and answer common questions to help you keep up-to-date with your foster care license.

April - Foster Care and Adoption Library

Children and Family Services maintains a small library of books that include titles on a multitude of topics including Adoption, Parenting, Teens, Attachment, Development, Special Needs, Sexual Abuse, Grief and Trauma, Transracial Issues, and Kinship Issues. Foster parents can obtain a list of available books through their social worker or licensing worker, and then check out any books that interest them. Keep in mind that foster parents can obtain some annual training hours by reading foster care-related books! After reading a book, a foster parent must provide their licensing worker with a one page write-up on what was learned from the book. This is limited to one book, which may count for 3 annual training hours. All the books in our library will count toward training hours, but if you have another book you think will qualify, please check with your licensing worker first. If you have any questions about the Foster Care and Adoption Library, feel free to contact your licensing worker.



Social Worker Profile

Social Worker Profiles is featured in hopes it will help familiarize foster parents with the social workers they have or may work with. Anyone with a suggestion of a social worker to be interviewed can contact Jonathan Toste at jjtoste@gmail.com.

Social Worker: *Jolie Clark, MSW, Supervisor/Continuing Services Unit*

Why did you choose to work in the field of social work?

My mother is a social worker, and I grew up going to her work events, meeting her clients and participating in outreach. So, in some ways, it just feels entirely natural. In addition, I also stumbled into working at an attachment model group home that some of you may remember—Children's Garden—after I graduated from college and fell in love with the work.

What is your background and history as a social worker? How long have you

been doing this work?

I have a MSW from SF State and have been doing this work for—yipes—eighteen years. Specifically, I have been working for Marin County Children and Family Services for nearly six years. Before that, I worked as a home health aide for the elderly, an aide in special education classrooms, a therapist and a group home counselor.

What are the most rewarding and most challenging parts of your work as a social worker?

I think, overall, the most rewarding part of my job is seeing how capable people really are of change and moving their lives forward. We enter into situations at times where it seems almost inconceivable that a family will be able to not only reunify but remain stable over the long term and yet we see it happen time and time again.

I think the most challenging part of my job is the realization that sometimes

there are no "good" answers and that even if we do everything as well as we can, children are still going to sustain lasting trauma due to their situation and, at times, due to our interventions.

Is there anything in particular you would like to share with foster parents?

Like many SW interviewees, I would just like to convey my deep gratitude to the foster parent community for the thoughtfulness and compassion that you bring to your work. We would be nowhere without you! Also, as many of you have heard, our Icebreakers program is in the works and I hope you are as excited about it as I am. Many of our most successful cases have been immeasurably helped by an alliance between the foster parent and birth parent. Thank you all for being so receptive to this idea!

Foster Parent/Social Worker Expectations

The culmination of many Foster Parent Collaborative meetings is a concise and clear list of both expectations foster parents have of social workers and expectations social workers have of foster parents. Over the last year, the collaborative meetings focused on putting these lists together for distribution amongst foster parents and social workers. Bree Marchman in Licensing is in the process of finalizing, printing and, possibly, laminating these lists. This brings the Foster Parent Collaborative meetings to an end.

The Marin Human Race—May 8, 2010

Although last year's Hula Hoop/Jump Rope A Thon was fun for those that attended, we have decided to join forces with the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership and participate in this year's Marin Human Race. If you aren't familiar with this huge nonprofit fundraiser, it consists of a 5K, mostly flat course around the Marin Center Fairgrounds and Lagoon. You can choose to walk or run the course. It is on Saturday, May 8, 2010 and begins at 8:30 AM (Registration begins at 7:00 AM). In the past, the MFPA participants have chosen a meeting place and walked the course—with kids in tow—together. The weather is usually perfect this time of year, and, walking, takes about 1.5 hours. If anyone is interested in arranging a picnic afterwards, the area around the lagoon is a great location. It is an easy event to help raise funds for the MFPA! All you need to do is obtain a registration form (either from Cesar Lagleva—telephone: 846-3789 or via email: gia-clay@yahoo.com or at the MHR website: www.marinhumanrace.org), register yourself and family members, and then ask all of your family and friends to support you and the association in your efforts! This is our only scheduled fundraiser this year, so participation is imperative. The money raised supports everything we offer to foster families such as monthly trainings, the annual picnic, an annual holiday event and monthly newsletter distribution!



Establishing Quarterly Policy Meetings

Description

On Thursday, April 1, 2010 the Marin Foster Parent Association (MFPA) discussed and approved the idea of engaging members of the Health and Human Services Department's Children and Family Services (CFS) personnel in a quarterly policy group discussion as part of its ongoing effort to strengthen communication, collaboration and partnership. The MFPA board has had continuing discussions about the explicit role and responsibilities to its members on a host of issues and ideas brought forth by the association members. One of the several key roles and responsibilities that the board identified is to work collaboratively with all stakeholders, particularly with CFS, for the purpose of addressing macro-related and/or systemic issues that directly impact foster care children.

Purpose of the Quarterly Policy Meeting

- To promote and foster collaborative partnerships through sharing of information and ideas about the foster care system
- To provide reciprocal information about current and emerging issues and trends related to policies, procedures and best practices
- To receive updated information on current, pending and new legislation/policies that affect the foster care system as a whole

Goals

- To strengthen and maintain effective communication between MFPA and

CFS

- To identify, examine and discuss issues, concerns, changes and ideas, and to make recommendations to appropriate decision making entities, as appropriate, around policies, procedures and practices

Objectives

- Conduct quarterly meetings between members of MFPA board and CFS' administrators and/or management staff
- Provide updated and pertinent information to CFS staff and MFPA members about policies, procedures and practices through newsletters and staff memos

Dunk Tank Volunteers Needed

A few good volunteers needed for this year's DUNK TANK at the annual MFPA picnic. The date is June 18th at McInnis Park in San Rafael. Can you volunteer for a 1/2 hour shift in the dunk tank? You'll be the coolest person at the picnic! Shifts begin at 1:00—the first volunteers get the time slot of their choice! Social workers contact Kim Contreras. Foster Parents contact Carol Ihlenburg.



For those who haven't had the pleasure of meeting social worker, **Erin Lynch**, you have missed out on knowing a dedicated, hard working and compassionate person. Erin was diagnosed with Stage IV Metastatic Breast Cancer in mid-January, 2010. This was a shocking and unexpected diagnosis for everyone involved in Erin's life. She is currently receiving chemotherapy and is actively engaged in her treatment. She is ready to fight! Please support Erin, her partner Tony, her three beautiful boys, and her family, with your love and encouraging words. Thank you. Friend and co-worker Kristin Shore has created a CaringBridge website for those who would like to send Erin good wishes or just share something with her as well as read about her progress. Visit the CaringBridge website by going to: <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/erinlynch>. Create a password or use erinrocks.



Hello? Hello? Anyone There?

Could you call a few, say 10, fellow foster parents each month? Our phone tree callers reach out to foster parents once a month to see how they are doing, remind them about our monthly Meet and Eat and to check if they are getting this wonderful newsletter. We break for a few months during the summer and, even if you could just be a stand-in once in a while, it sure would help us out. Please call our phone tree chairman, Jonathan Toste: 415-258-9459 or jjtoste@gmail.com

The Marin Foster Parent Association (MFPA) is an organization comprised of licensed foster and adoptive parents in Marin County and members of the community interested in helping to achieve the goals and purposes of our association as stated below.

The primary objectives and purposes of the MFPA, as stated in the California State Foster Parent Association, Inc. bylaws are:

- A. To establish a local chapter of the California State Foster Parent Association bringing together all foster parents, agency personnel and interested community citizens who wish to work together for the same purposes as set forth below.
- B. To promote the general welfare of children that need protective care everywhere: at home, in the communities, in institutions and in public, private and religious schools.
- C. To develop a better understanding of the problem of foster home care by the persons and agencies involved in caring for children and the general public by encouraging and maintaining communications, and the interchange of ideas and cooperation between foster parents, county agencies, and the local communities.
- D. To encourage the training and education of personnel for work in the field of foster care, and to encourage the recruitment and retention of foster homes.
- E. To inform ourselves of the current information pertaining to the welfare of children.
- F. Notwithstanding the above statements, the chapter shall not, except to an insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the primary purpose.



Soup—Support Group

Soup group happened as scheduled the last Friday in March. The social workers were not able to make it as they had a prior commitment. We missed them, but they get another chance in April as they are invited and welcome to join us. I will be amassing the spread for a Tortilla Soup, Mexican style, with homemade tortillas. It is a fun soup to participate in! Come on over to my place the last Friday of April (April 30th) right after the big First Five Annual breakfast of champions (which I will be attending also) - Noon - 2pm. You can never eat too much in one day, I always do say....

Last month's soup group was a comfortable group of regulars. Cathryn Burns, Maxeen Olenberg, Laura Paul, Jonathan Toste, Jeff Grey, Carol Ihlenburg, Linda Gregory, Scott Stitham, and I enjoyed Cream of Corn and Potato Chowder and Fresh Asparagus Soup.

We also enjoyed each other's company. I always assume the soup group gatherings are all about food and the desserts and the homemade iced tea and lemonade. But really, soup group is about camaraderie and connections. We get together because we like to be together in a safe environment and chat, share, vent, gripe, whine and laff!!!! Really, where else can foster parents get together and share feelings and thoughts that may be confidential, or sensitive and taboo? And get intelligent feedback that is pertinent, related and based on experience? We can meet for an hour or two and support each other in a way that is affirming and respected, and not worry about allegations and we can joke about stuff that we all relate to. I know soup group is all that for me, and this last month a number of foster folks really needed some support and care, and we were there with all the support they needed. It will be a different experience with Social Workers in attendance and that is fabulous because we are going to get a different perspective on thoughts and feelings with them here. So bring it on: I challenge you social workers, supervisors and transport staff....come on over, heap on the salsa in your big bowls of soup and BE with us, eating, laughing, and sharing our hearts!!!! And maybe you'll get an opportunity to hold a baby, wipe up spit and/or chase a toddler!!! Mimi Katz 492-0207, pls rsvp if you can, I need to know if it will be 6 gallons of soup or 9 gallons!!!!!! -Mimi Katz, Soup Group Chair

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