

Funding for Tutoring and After School Enrichment Programs

Thanks to a grant from The Marin Charitable Association, the Marin Foster Parent Association has funding for tutoring and after school enrichment available for children in the dependency system. This funding is 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 re apply. 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 after school 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 served 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!



Foster Care Collaborative Update

On February 10th the Marin County Foster Care Collaborative met for its monthly meeting. The group has agreed to begin looking at our expectations of one another, and this month we began to explore what expectations social workers may have of foster parents. This discussion will continue next month, and will be followed with examining the expectations foster parents have of social workers and other Children & Family Services staff people.

The Collaborative is still welcoming new members, so please join us to share your perspective! The group is committed to the mission of improving the working relationship of foster parents with CFS staff, toward the end of providing the very best service to our children and families. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. We meet at the new Health and Wellness Campus, 3240 Kerner Blvd., Room 109. Refreshments are served.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, March 10th, 10 a.m. to 12 noon, 3240 Kerner Blvd., Room 109, San Rafael, 94901.

-Marty Graff, Social Services Program Manager I

This year's Fire Squirts camp will be held July 20 – 24 and is open to kids 10 – 14. For those not familiar with it, members of the Novato Fire Department volunteer their time to work with the kids for the week. The children learn skills (including repelling down walls). They get to wear firemen gear as well. Every day a different restaurant donates lunch. It is a great experience for the kids. And it's free!

Novato Fire Department reserves spots specifically for CASA kids. But it's important that we let them know in advance that those spots are taken or they will be released.

Please be thinking about this camp week as you plan your summer schedules. We will have applications and further information in the next few months. We are hoping that we will be able to have signed applications for the kids by mid May. If you need further information, please contact Cyndy Doherty at 507-9016 or cyndy@marinadvocates.org

Welcome New Foster Parents

Marin County Children and Family Services is happy to welcome our newest foster parents, Jennifer and Abel Garcia. The Garcias live in Mill Valley and are interested in caring for boys and girls age five to twelve (they are licensed for two). Jennifer is a social worker and Abel, an ordained minister as well as a certified primary school teacher, is furthering his education at the Mill Valley Seminary. They both have a significant amount of experience working with children and are insightful and philosophical where parenting is concerned. Their approach to foster care grows out of a firm dedication to supporting children's natural curiosity, self-esteem and personal strengths. Jennifer and Abel both enjoy the outdoors. He plays soccer, enjoys bicycle riding and is passionate about surfing. Her interests includes photography, scrap-booking and creating a nurturing home. Jennifer and Abel both value family a great deal; their respectful, playful and fun lifestyle will benefit children who need a stable and loving home. Having moved to Marin from Florida only a few months ago, the Garcias look forward to meeting other foster parents. We at MCFS are thrilled to work with Jennifer and Abel, and are certain they will have a great deal to offer children in foster care. *—Cindy Wasserman, MSW, Licensing Social Worker*

A Former Foster Child's Perspective

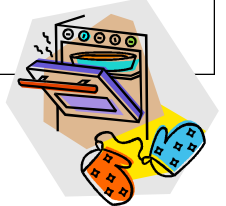
Loving, honest, and understanding is how I define a true parent - blood related or not. The ideal foster parent or guardian is one that nurtures their children by all means to promote a healthy childhood in order to ease the transition into adulthood. A foster child has essential needs such as clothing, food, and shelter, but they also need structure, freedom, encouragement, and communication. All of these factors play an important role in the lives of foster children. As a young teen, fourteen to be exact, I was living with a fifth foster parent. I had not connected with my previous foster families for reasons I did not know. So I made up a conclusion: None of them had the time or devotion to analyze my emotional problems. I was out of control, suicidal, and depressed. I felt like a bag labeled "BURDEN" being passed around. I needed a parent that would truly care about what had happened that brought me into the foster care system. I really was a troubled child that needed an experienced parent. Luckily, this was the last time I would be placed in a home.

My last foster parent is the parent that changed my life completely. While living with him and his family, I learned to value second chances. He gave me structure and punished me when necessary. I am able to look back now and appreciate him for correcting my behavior. Freedom was given to me under two conditions: To respect my curfew and to always answer my cell phone. During my first few months with him, I was hospitalized twice for suicide attempts. Thankfully, that is now in my past. My depression was treated with medication which I have been off of for four years as I am doing well. However, I continue to have therapy sessions at the age of twenty-one. I believe regular therapy is an integral part of my life and cannot say if I will ever discontinue it. My foster parent is the kind of parent that will encourage and motivate you to graduate high school. He will not allow you to give up on education! We had a father-daughter communication that was established from the start and that was what allowed me to receive his help. Most importantly, he gave me his unconditional love and utmost attention as if I was his biological daughter.

Anyone considering becoming or is currently a foster parent must realize that every child has a past which may greatly affect their emotions, behavior, and growth. Foster parents need to acknowledge the potential situations which may arise. I highly encourage foster parents not to give up. My foster parent did not give up on me because he is truly devoted to being a parent. I truly believe the key to being a great foster parent is to identify the needs of the child and act on it.

Being a former foster child has made me who I am today—a hardworking student that values her education. I am enrolled full time in college and working part time. I owe my life changing experiences to a foster parent that did not give up on me. Thank you Poppa!

Recipe Corner—Frittata



Cook it as a meal with a salad, a healthy after school snack, or a wonderful Sunday brunch. When I cook I don't usually follow a recipe—I throw in a little of this and a little of that. You can't really go wrong with making it to your own taste. I often see what I have around the house that sounds good at the moment and add it to the mixture so things don't get boring.

Ingredients

1 dozen eggs Apx. $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk Olive Oil for cooking
Large bag of grated cheese (or you can grate it yourself—Monterey Jack or sharp cheddar/ or mix the 2)

*If you like it a little spicy add Jalapeno Jack cheese $\frac{1}{2}$ an onion

Here's where you can change things up:

Any type of sausage: pork, Italian, chicken, veggie Or Shrimp (shrimp makes a much lighter frittata)

Spinach Mushrooms Sun dried tomatoes, olives Zucchini Asparagus Thinly sliced potatoes
(Or whatever your heart desires) Shredded parmesan cheese Salt & Pepper

Crack eggs into a bowl. Add Milk and apx. $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of salt and pepper to taste. Beat well. Add grated cheese to the egg mixture. Meanwhile warm oven to 350 degrees. Sauté onion in olive oil until golden, using a large skillet that has some depth to it and can be placed in the oven. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add sausage or shrimp. Saute a bit more, not too hot, so the bottom of the skillet doesn't burn. Pour in a little additional olive oil if necessary. Add veggies or any goodies you want to throw into the mixture. Simmer a bit. Next, gently mix in the egg and cheese mixture. Add a little more olive oil to the sides of the skillet where the egg mixture meets the edges. Sprinkle parmesan cheese on top. Place in oven for approximately 45-60 minutes. The frittata will rise and brown. Let the frittata cool a bit before cutting and serving. As an appetizer version, forget everything except eggs, milk, cheese, add marinated artichokes in oil and perhaps olives. Just mix it in a Pyrex rectangular dish and cook for 30-45 minutes in an oven at 350 degrees. Cut into squares and serve. Very simple and yummy. -Andrea Pino

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.

2009 MFPA Executive Board Members

Vidette Poe, President
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Jonathan Toste, Vice President/
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258-9459
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Andrea Pino, Secretary
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Carol Ihlenburg, Treasurer
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Members At Large

Christine Andrews (785-3316)

Mimi Katz (492-0207)

Cesar Lagleva (846-3789)

Terrie Green (331-2156)

Newsletter Editors

Carol Ihlenburg
Vidette Poe



Fun 'N Games At Soup Group

Another soup group on Friday January 30 was well attended and deliciously successful. We are ever grateful that school is back in session and the only small people at soup group this month wore diapers and did not back talk much. A bit of whining and clingy behavior is often a nice interlude when you are used to oppositional and defiant interaction. Really, we all realize these days, we have an awesome group of kids in our care. No one is having out of the ordinary challenges, and the babies at soup group were equally appreciative of our love and care. In attendance were Andrea Pino, Christine Swain, Peggy Byrnes, Vidette Poe, Christine Andrews, Carol Ihlenburg, Kathryn Burns, Laura Paul, Monica and Jim Walsh, Rachel Norman, Karen Bauman, and myself, Mimi Katz. We discussed the usual foster care stuff like:

fostering vs adopting the older child, understanding funding for kincare, and court issues in regards to kincare vs foster care. Lots of discussion around these issues because the shift from foster care to kin care is prevalent. We are trying to understand it amongst ourselves and it may be an upcoming topic for social services to sit with us and explain. Well, after we got bored with relevant discussion we decided to pull out the poker chips. We moved our soups aside and commenced upon a rocking and rowdy game of high stakes poker! Since we are all rolling in easy cash these days, poker was really exciting when we were playing with real 5 and 10 dollar bids. Christine Andrews was up \$55 when Andrea Pino swept from behind with a Royal Flush that took all the cash out on the table. She tried to go home with a whopping \$95 and everyone else had to settle for a second bowl of soup instead. Jim Walsh was sad about his loss: \$50 but challenged Andrea to a little one on one basketball for his money back out in the cul de sac. They played ball and he recouped his loss and the luncheon ended pleasantly after all. Next month we will play charades, and have a jump rope contest. Please join us on the last Friday of February (the 27th). Come prepared for any kind of shenanigans I can think up!!! -Mimi Katz

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: The MFPA currently has a membership of 31! If you have not joined yet, please take a minute to do so (there is a membership application on the last page of this newsletter). The MFPA is a completely volunteer run organization. Your membership not only shows you support what foster parents do but also assists us in the cost of distributing this newsletter as well as hosting foster family events including an annual picnic and holiday event.
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MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 6726, San Rafael, CA 94903



MFPA Membership Application

Name: _____

Complete Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Membership Fees: \$ 35.00 for individual membership; \$45.00 for family membership

*Please mail completed form with membership fee to:

Marin Foster Parent Association, Attn. Treasurer, P.O. Box 6726, San Rafael, CA 94903

To be removed from the MFPA newsletter mailing list, please call (415) 507-0557!