

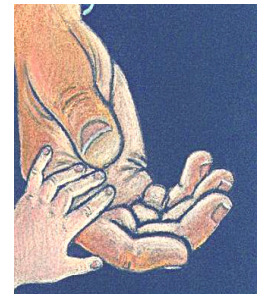


MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

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

(415) 507-0557

www.mfpa.net



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MFPA February 2010 Newsletter



Ski week has come and gone—I hope you were able to enjoy the extra time with your children over this Marin specific holiday week. With the new year, we've had changes in our monthly Meet and Eat days and location (2nd Tuesday of the month at the Health and Wellness Campus). If you missed the January Meet and Eat, you missed an informative and interesting presentation by Beth Hall, the Executive Director of Pact, An Adoption Alliance on transracial parenting. Pact is an organization located in Oakland that provides adoption-related services to children of color, their birth parents and their adoptive parents. Ms. Hall provided information on the different aspects of transracial families such as race, ethnicity and culture. She is an adoptive parent herself of transracial children and was able to answer many questions posed to her throughout the evening about providing the best adoptive parenting for children of a different race than the parents. For more information, please visit their website at www.pactadopt.org.

This month's Meet and Eat was held at our new location, the Health and Wellness Campus in San Rafael. Joanel Serra, MFT from Huckleberry Youth Services spoke about mental health issues that may effect teens/youth in our care including but not limited to depression (how to identify and treat it), drug use and the "spectrum" which consists of symptoms of autism to asbergers. Huckleberry Youth Services offers a program to high school age youth to assist them if they are interested in becoming educated in any type of health care field which can include anything from social work to becoming a physician. There was a lot of interaction between those in attendance and Ms. Serra. For more information on Huckleberry Youth Services, visit their website at <http://www.huckleberryyouth.org/home.html>.

Next month, the Meet and Eat will be held on March 9th. Commissioner Goldfine and Deputy County Counsel Michele "Micki" Keno will join us for a round table/Q&A discussion on their role in the dependency system. This will provide a great opportunity to get to know the players on the "legal" side of providing foster care. Come with questions in hand! Mimi Katz is now our "food" person for the Meet and Eats, so, if you come at 6:00 for the dinner portion, there's no telling what delicious food you will get to try! See attached flyer for more details. -Carol Ihlenburg, MFPA Newsletter Editor

DIAPERS FOR FOSTER BABIES!

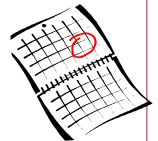
Also at our Meet and Eat this month, a group of students from Drake High School shared about a project they undertook for a class about social causes. They organized a Diaper Drive for children in foster care. They successfully collected over 4,000 diapers. If you are caring for a baby or child in diapers, contact Bree Marchman at 473-7136. Thank you to the ambitious, socially conscious high school students!



Crissy and Alexa

Upcoming Events

- ❖ **February 26:** Soup Group, San Rafael, 12—2 PM
 - ❖ **March 4:** MFPA Executive Board meeting, San Rafael, 10AM-12PM
 - ❖ **March 6:** Adoption Stories: Helping Adopted Youth Understand & Explain Their Adoption, Oakland, 9AM-4PM
 - ❖ **March 8:** Annual MFPA Picnic Planning meeting, San Rafael, 11AM—12PM
 - ❖ **March 9:** MFPA monthly Meet and Eat, San Rafael, 6:30—8:30 PM
 - ❖ **March 19:** Permanency: A Legal & Psychological Mandate For Foster Children, Sacramento, 9AM-4PM
 - ❖ **March 19:** DeAnne Schlau, Community Violence Solutions/ Rape Crisis Center, San Rafael, 11-12:30
 - ❖ **March 23:** Kids, Parents, and Power Struggles: Secrets of Effective Discipline, Larkspur, 7-9 PM
 - ❖ **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.

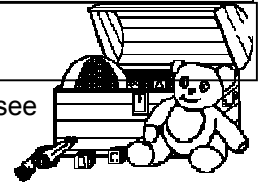


Funding for Tutoring and After School Enrichment Programs



Thanks to a grant from The Marin Charitable Association, the Marin Foster Parent Association has funding 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!

Toys For Kids Who Attend Court!



I am a court reporter who reports cases that are heard in the dependency courtroom. Many times I see children come into the courtroom with a look of apprehension. They are sometimes in the midst of being reunified with their family, being detained, or sometimes being called in to testify. Fortunately, through the generous donations from the Marin Foster Parent Association and other organizations, we now have a toy chest that sits right in the middle of Courtroom A. It is filled with wonderful toys and stuffed animals. The children are invited to open the toy chest and pick out a toy of their choice. We have everything from games to books to craft-making kits. It makes a trip to court a little less intimidating and, perhaps, something the children can look forward to.



Thank You, Storage Solutions!

Our storage units are now complete! Thanks to Storage Solutions, who donated 6 sets of shelving units, and to Novato Empire Storage, who donated 2 10x10 storage units, the donations received from Toys for Tots, Sleep Train and The Pajama Project have an organized home. Now, when a foster child needs items such as shoes, school supplies or clothing, it is easier to locate their size! Thanks so much to Mark, Matt, Kris and Carol for spending several hours at the storage facility putting together these great, metal shelving units (it was no easy feat!). Please remember these items are available, and call Carol (507-1822) to arrange a time to pick them up if you have a child in your care in need!



PRE-SCHEDULED DENTAL APPOINTMENTS!!!

In an effort to provide more timely initial dental exams to Marin foster children, Health Care Program For Children in Foster Care (HCPCFC), in collaboration with Children & Family Services and Marin County Dental Clinic, will be scheduling dental appointments for Marin foster children ages 3 years and older, who are residing in Marin. Dental appointments will be scheduled only for foster children who have been recently placed or transferred to a new home. Appointments will be scheduled by the Public Health Nurse upon notice of the child's placement. Dental visits will take place at the Marin County Dental Clinic on 411 Fourth Street, **SUITE A**. If the child is an established client of Marin Community Clinics Dental Services at Kerner Blvd in San Rafael, appointments will be scheduled for that location. Efforts will be made to schedule appointments after school hours.

Foster parents will receive notice of the appointment date and time by mail and/or phone. Please watch out for a yellow form, which will include the child's dental appointment and Medi-Cal information, in the CHDP packet.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Nita Gibson, Sr. Public Health Nurse, HCPCFC at (415) 473-7459 or email nlaglevagibson@co.marin.ca.us

THE WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHY AND HOW OF DE FACTO PARENT STATUS

WHO: Any non-parent who has an interest in the care and custody of a child who is a dependent of the juvenile court may apply to the court for de facto parent status. A de facto parent is a person who is the current or recent caretaker of a child and who has assumed the role of a parent to the child, fulfilling the child's physical and psychological needs for care and affection on a daily basis. The terms "psychological parent" and "de facto parent" are sometimes used interchangeably. To qualify as a de facto parent, the applicant need not be the child's current or immediately preceding custodian. The applicant must have cared for the child for a substantial period of time; however, there is no clear requirement of a minimum amount of time. The quality of the relationship between the caretaker and the child may be at least as important as its duration.

WHAT: De Facto parents are entitled to the same procedural rights as biological parents, but they do not have the same substantive rights and preferences as legal parents or guardians. This means, de facto parents have a right to notice and an opportunity to be heard and the court may appoint counsel if it deems appropriate; however they do not have the right to reunification services or visitation and cannot be ordered to participate in services.

WHEN: You may file for de facto parent status at the dispositional stage of the proceedings or at any subsequent hearing at which the status of the dependent child is at issue.

WHY: The doctrine recognizes that persons who have provided a child with daily parental concern, affection, and care over substantial time may develop legitimate interests and perspectives which should not be ignored in a juvenile proceeding. Some reasons one might seek de facto parent status include (1) issues around visitation (increase/decrease in visitation time, inclusion/exclusion of others in visitation plans, change of location or protocol for visits, or obtaining/ending supervised visitation); (2) issues around permanency including competing with others for adoptive placement, voicing disagreement with department's choice of permanent plan, or advocating the acceptance/rejection of an adoptive home study; (3) problem resolution such as obtaining or maintaining licensing as a foster parent, obtaining approval as the child's adoptive parents, or obtaining a pre-adoptive home study; (4) pre or post termination of parental rights hearing placement dispute,; (5) ability to have input at an upcoming review hearing or a pending motion and/or (6) a foster parent or relative planning or expecting to adopt the child seeks legal representation after termination of parental rights, because the department has withdrawn its support for the client's adoption application. .

HOW: The applicant completes and files with the court the De Facto Parent Request Form (JV-295) and De Facto Parent Statement (JV-296) which can be found at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/forms/juvenile. The forms must be filed with the court and served on all parties. It is good practice to discuss with the attorneys for all parties the position of the applicant to assess their position and work toward resolution of any issues prior to filing. The court will review the application and can either (1) grant the application (if no objections); (2) deny the application; or (3) grant a hearing on the application.

In determining whether to grant de facto parent status, the court looks at the specific facts of each case using a totality of the circumstances approach. The court considers the following in making its determination: (1) whether the child has psychologically bonded with the applicant; (2) whether the applicant has acted as a parent on a day-to-day basis for a substantial amount of time; (3) whether the applicant has information about the child that the other parties in the case cannot provide; (4) whether the applicant has regularly attended juvenile court hearings; and (5) whether a subsequent dependency proceeding might result in an order permanently ending contact between the applicant and the child. The stage the case is in and the known or expected positions of the parties already involved in the litigation are also considered. Other items of consideration are whether reunification is a realistic possibility, whether another party opposes the application, and whether the application of a de facto parent to the case will make the litigation more or less adversarial.

Food For Thought: There are other ways to get what the applicant may be wanting without placing the issue in an adversarial posture, which is inevitable when filing for de facto parent status. The best way to ensure the applicant can be heard is to partner with a party that shares the applicant's position. If the applicant is a foster parent they have the ability to be present at hearings post disposition as well as the right to complete the caregiver information form (JV 290). If the applicant is a relative, he/she has a right to attend the hearings and address the court. My suggestion is to contact the department, minor's counsel or CASA to see if their position may be the same as the applicant and if the parties can join forces to get what is best for the minor. Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions regarding de facto parent status applications. -Kelly Reiter, CWLS Family & Children's Law Center (492-9230)



Social Worker Profile

Social Worker Profiles is something the MFPA hopes 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.

Profiled: *Jeannie Damazio, SSW*

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

I grew up in a family that believed in public service. Both sides of grandparents were active in unions and politics. My paternal grandmother was the Secretary for Seamstresses Union for the State of New York. She worked closely with FDR who at the time was Governor of New York on the rights of workers. My parents were also very involved in public service and politics. My father was a pilot in the air force and very much believed in serving his country. Both my parents were involved in Democratic politics, and, since I was a small child, I have been campaigning in some way for the Democratic Party. When I was in college in my early 20's, after many years of volunteering for the party, I was asked to run the Democratic Party Volunteer office in San Rafael on the weekends for Bill Clinton's first run for the presidency. I met many government officials such as both Senator's Feinstein and Boxer, Congresswomen Lynn Woolsey and even Patrick Kennedy (son of the late Senator Ted Kennedy). I also met some movie stars!! Because of my upbringing and experiences with politics, Social Services seemed a natural choice.

What is your background and history as a social worker/How long have you been doing this work?

After college I first was a volunteer at CFS (then called CPS) working with the Public Health Nurses on the Health and Education Passport System. I then became a CASA volunteer and worked with clients and going to court. Then I was offered a position at CASA as the Volunteer Coordinator and Recruiter. I worked with CASA's on their cases. I really loved working for CASA but found Non Profit life very hard; the pay was low and the benefits were minimal. I worked at CASA for a couple of years until CPS opened up a second Senior Support Service Worker position, and I applied for that job. At the time there was only one woman doing all of the visits by herself. That was 13 years ago!

What is the most rewarding and most challenging part of your work as a social worker?

I have really liked being a part of all the "extras" at CFS such as the Arts Fund, Summer Camp Scholarships and the Holiday Gift Drive. I used to assist the Art Fund more by helping to line up the lessons and activities the foster children were given scholarships for. The arts, specifically choir and drama, were always a big part of my life growing up. I firmly believe that the arts provide an outlet for children to express themselves as well as an opportunity for co-operation and self discovery. I also used to coordinate overnight summer camps for the foster children. It was rewarding to get children lined up with activities and experiences they might not

otherwise have had a chance to do. I had to stop being a part of these projects due to the county budget as well as the volume of visits we now do. I still coordinate the Holiday Toy Drive. The most challenging part of the job the last couple of years has been the volume of visits that we provide in Marin County. As most foster parents are aware, we provide a lot of visitation for children in the foster care system. Many families get daily visitation. One family can take up a fourth of a Senior Support Service Worker's time, especially when sibling groups are placed in separate foster homes or out of county. A one hour visit can take 3-3.5 hours when you include transportation of all the children. The Supervisors, Case Workers and many of you foster parents are very helpful in coordinating all of this and somehow we manage to get it all done!

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

I seem to spend a lot of time at foster parent's homes transporting children. I feel I have gotten to know many of you on a personal level. I appreciate when, after a long day, many of you welcome me in for a drink of water and a chat. I really admire the work that foster parents do. I get to go home at night after a long day and relax. Your jobs are 24/7. The children of Marin are very lucky.

It's Time To Start Planning The MFPA Annual Picnic!

It's time to begin planning our annual picnic. If you've attended this event, you understand a lot goes on. It takes an organized team to make sure everything is in place. Mimi Katz and I are co-chairing the planning committee this year. We both have graduating high school seniors, so we would like to have the preparation done as much in advance as possible. The main tasks are soliciting donations, picking up donations, setting up and cleaning up. If you would like to be a part of this great, fun event, please plan to come to the meeting on March 8th. Call for details (507-1822). -Carol Ihlenburg

Chronicles of Adoption by Jonathan Toste

What history do you know about your biological family?

I grew up not knowing I was adopted, I was illegally brought across the US/Mexican border. Most of the information I obtained about my birth family was revealed to me later in life, in Spanish, by my Nana's cousin, who had nursed me at birth, and was translated into English to me by her daughter. My "Nana" arranged for me to be bought for \$1,500 in 1956 from my birth mother. I don't know who my biological parents are. All I know is my mother was very young and destitute. I was born in Mexicali. Nana's youngest son was married to a woman who had diabetes and couldn't have children. My "Nana" gave me to her cousin's wife who had just given birth to a baby girl 3 days prior. She nursed me (and her own daughter) until I was 2 weeks old; meanwhile, Nana's son and his wife came down from California to pick me up. When I was 6 months old, Nana and her husband went back to Mexicali and attempted to "trade me in" for the baby born to her cousin's wife, because she was lighter in color. Before they left, my birth mother knocked on the door. My Nana answered and my birth mother said, "Give me my money! You owe me my money!" My Nana replied, "I don't owe you any money!!! How much for that baby in your belly?" and slammed the door in her face. My birth mother was already 6 month's pregnant. This was the last time my Nana's cousin saw my birth mother.

At what age and for how long were you in adoption or foster care?

I was illegally "adopted." Nana's older brother was a Baptist minister and he "fixed" my birth certificate to say her son's wife gave birth while visiting Mexico. When I was 2, my "Mother" died of

kidney and liver failure brought on by diabetes. I was cared for by my aunts and was raised with my cousins. I grew up in a "pack" of kids (cousins), pretty happily. When my adoptive mother died, I was very sad, even though I didn't really know her.

What was the most comforting thing your guardians or other adults in your life did for you regarding the issue of adoption?

When I was 4 or 5 years old, my adoptive "Father" remarried a woman who had a daughter from a previous marriage. I went to small community schools and the 4 of us lived the "perfect" life. My adoptive father and his new wife had 2 children together (both boys). I basically raised my brothers and sister. My "parents" worked and I did all the cooking and cleaning and didn't have a childhood as my stepmother hated me and wanted only to dote on her daughter. My stepmother was physically and emotionally abusive. When I was about 12 years old, my adoptive father molested me. I was afraid to tell anyone. I knew it wasn't right, but I felt he was the only real "family" I had. At this time, I believed he was my real father. I was afraid they would send him to jail. Even though he was physically abusive and would beat my stepsister and me (never my brothers), I felt he was the only one to protect me from the scary world. I tried to tell my stepmom about the molestation, but she thought I was crazy, and the abuse continued. When I was about 14, my stepsister said something that made me realize she had been molested by my "father" also. I then felt I could re approach my stepmother about it. I remember the moment when my stepmother confronted my "father" - screaming in public at the gas station where he worked. He denied it, of course. When he finally con-

fessed, he said to me "YOU ARE NOT EVEN MY DAUGHTER!!!" This is when I found out I was adopted. I felt lost, with no one and nothing to hold on to.

What kind of "fantasy option" do you wish was available to you to solve the biggest issues you faced growing up?

The only real fantasy that I had continually, and looking back, I can honestly say, saved me, was that one day I would find out who my real parents were, and maybe they were someone in power, like royalty and that I was really a princess and an heir to a throne ... or of great wealth!

What ability of yours best helped you to achieve the success you have found in your adulthood?

I have two beautiful and amazing children. My children and I are close and they are wise beyond their years. I feel they have learned greatly from my past and my experiences. I feel fortunate and do not have any regrets. I have an incredible amount of compassion and understanding for many. My life experiences have shaped me and have made me the beautiful person I am today. I may never know who my real parents are in this lifetime. I am very grateful for their lives in bringing me into this world. I will always honor them.

The above story is true and accurate. The interviewee does not and never did live in Marin County. We are looking for other, over 30 year-old, fostered or adopted adults to participate in telephone interviews. Please write: 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.

Hello 2010—Let's Eat Soup!



There was another huge turnout for Soup Group last month. People were done with their diets and really wanted to tank up, I guess. I made French Onion Soup with fresh croutons from the baguettes at Panera, and I whipped up Cream of Mushroom Soup (made with cream), and there were no left-overs. For dessert, we ate blondies and brownies. I guess no one really took the diet thing too seriously, or the end of January felt like close enough to February to quit the diets. We discussed a question posed by Carol Ihlenburg on behalf of a subcommittee formed out of the Blue Ribbon Commission - "What information would you like to have when a foster child is placed in your home?" We came up with about ten bullets we agreed on as most useful, among them past history, both medical and psychological. We would like to know about past 'acting out' experiences, because we understand that all kids have potential and will be easy to care for, but, after the honeymoon ends, the kids are often much more difficult than

was ever communicated to us. We want to know about their likes and dislikes, cultural preferences, and triggers to upsets, if known. Other things that are helpful, but not always available, are parent's situation and the level of involvement expected. Transportation issues, school issues, and health issues, of course, are important to know about. Does the child have an IEP? What are reasons for past placement failures? These were some of the things discussed at soup group and the round table feeling was great. In attendance were Sherri Difranza, Scott Stitham, Maxeen Olenberg, Rachel Norman, Laura and John Abramson, Laura Paul, Carol Ihlenburg, Linda Gregory, Peggy Byrne, Trish Bainer, Karen Bauman, Christine Swain, Sharon Skolnick-Bagnoli, Vidette Poe, Chris Andrews, and the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders. They were especially lively, and showed us some awesome dance moves. Christine Andrews and Scott Stitham got especially rowdy and jumped up on the table and threatened to take their clothes off, but I reminded them that was the Chippendales, not the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders, and they contained themselves. In March, Soup Group is open to social workers. I am thinking of doing a Tequila Taste-Off with the social workers. (Maybe like a big Poker Game?) Social workers will be invited again in July. We hope this will assist with taking away the mystery of eating with foster parents holding many small children in their laps at the same time. As a matter of fact, we may even share the small kids with social workers and let YOU hold them in YOUR laps. This month's Soup Group will be held Friday, February 26th, 12-2PM. Remember - these aren't potluck, kids are welcome and any foster care related conversation is always appreciated! If you have questions - call me at 492-0207. -Mimi Katz, Soup Group Chair

2010 MFPA Executive Board Members

Cesar Lagleva, President
846-3789
giaclay@yahoo.com

Jonathan Toste, Vice President/
Phone Tree Chair
258-9459
jjtoste@gmail.com

Andrea Pino, Secretary
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Carol Ihlenburg, Treasurer
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Members At Large

Vidette Poe (465-4622)

Christine Andrews (785-3316)

Mimi Katz (492-0207)

Kathryn Jordan-Whittley
(898-5677)

Linda Gregory (479-8702)

Newsletter Crew

Carol Ihlenburg
Vidette Poe
Barbara Sabido



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; \$ 50.00 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!