



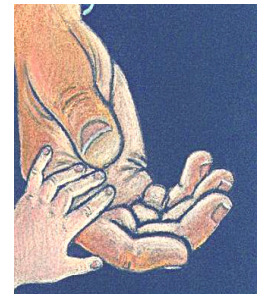
CHAPTER 9

# MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

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

(415) 507-0557

www.mfpa.net



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## MFPA January 2010 Newsletter

The Marin Foster Parent Association Executive Board met on January 17th for our annual retreat/planning meeting. The MFPA board members for 2010 are as follows:

President	Cesar Lagleva
Vice President	Jonathan Toste
Secretary	Andrea Pino
Treasurer	Carol Ihlenburg

Members at large are Mimi Katz, Linda Gregory, Christine Andrews, Vidette Poe and Kathryn Jordan-Whittley. We have several committees—many of which need additional volunteers listed below:

**Membership Committee** (Chairperson: Kathryn Jordan-Whittley)

**Phone Tree Committee** (Chairperson: Jonathan Toste; Members: Christine Andrews, Linda Gregory) \*We need 2 additional callers—PLEASE contact Jonathan if you can help!

**Meet and Eat Monthly Planning Committee** (Chairperson: Jonathan Toste/Linda Gregory; Members: Mimi Katz (food), Vidette Poe)

**Monthly Board Meeting Planning Committee** (Chairperson: Andrea Pino)

**Annual Picnic Committee** (Chairperson: Carol Ihlenburg; Members: Mimi Katz, Kim Contreras, Jonathan Toste) \*We always need volunteers for this committee-Please contact Carol if you can help!

**Annual Holiday Event** (Caroling Party) (Chairperson: Mimi Katz)

**Annual CASA Party** (Chairperson: Open)

**Fundraising** (Chairperson: Cesar Lagleva—May fundraiser "The Marin Human Race") \*Help Needed desperately!! Please contact Cesar if you can help!

**Foster Care Collaborative Committee** (Chairperson: Cesar Lagleva; Committee Members: Vidette Poe, Laura Abramson)

**Donations Committee** (Chairperson: Carol Ihlenburg)

**Grant Writing Committee** (Chairperson: Kathryn Jordan-Whittley) \*Contact Kathryn if you can help!

**Newsletter Committee** (Chairperson: Carol Ihlenburg; Members: Barbara Sabido, Vidette Poe, Mimi Katz)

**Advisory Committee** (To be determined)

If any of these committees sounds interesting or appealing to you and you'd like to find out more about them, please contact the chairperson listed.

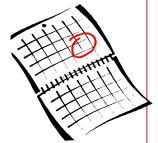
We are excited about beginning a new year and providing foster families in Marin with support necessary to provide excellent care to the foster children in Marin County. We have partnered with Sleep Train's Foster Kids Program and the Pajama Project to receive and distribute donations. We currently have shoes and pajamas for foster children in various sizes. If children in your care are in need of these items, please contact Carol Ihlenburg at 507-1822.

We will be hosting February's monthly Meet and Eat on February 9, 2010 with speakers from the Huckleberry Youth Services to talk about the mental needs of foster youth in transition. Please note the change of day/week and venue. For more details see the attached flyer. For 2010, our Meet and Eats will be held the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Health and Wellness Campus in San Rafael.

### Upcoming Events

#### ❖ January

**29:** Soup Group, San Rafael, 12—2 PM



❖ **February 9:** MFPA monthly Meet and Eat, San Rafael, 6:30—8:30 PM

❖ **March 19:** Permanency: A Legal & Psychological Mandate For Foster Children, Sacramento

*For information on any of the above events, contact Carol Ihlenburg or go to our website at [www.mfpa.net](http://www.mfpa.net).*

Thank you for all you do for the foster children of Marin! -Carol Ihlenburg, Newsletter Editor

## 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](mailto:cihlenburg@comcast.net). We are excited to offer this assistance to foster families!

## How to Prepare for Licensing's Annual Home Visit

Annual Inspections may be a scary time for a few, but I hope this will make it less painful and, eventually, a piece a cake. You will most likely receive a call from your licensing worker informing you you are due for your annual licensing visit. After you schedule a time, your LPA will mail a letter indicating when your appointment is scheduled with the Facility Review Tool for Foster Family Homes. The LPA will use this list during your annual inspection. The Facility Review Tool Form is like the cliff notes of Licensing, and it is a great resource. Take the time to review this form and start correcting any items in your home.

Your LPA will be looking for some of the following during your Annual Inspection:

- Your home is clean, safe, sanitary and in good repair
- Your telephone service is working
- An Emergency Plan is posted
- Children's Personal Rights knowledge
- Comfortable living accommodations are provided
- Age appropriate activities are provided for the children
- There is closet and drawer space for each child
- Your smoke detectors are in working condition
- All medications including those that require refrigeration are inaccessible to children
- Cleaners, toxics and other hazardous items are inaccessible to children (this includes air deodorizers, lotions and shampoos)
- Live scans clearances have been obtained for adults over 18
- Licensee have completed required annual hours of training (Basic Rate is 8 Hours/annually; Above this, 12 Hours/annually)
- CPR and First Aid requirements are up to date
- And children's records are complete.

Additionally, all homes that accept children under 10 years of age are required to have pool, hot tubs, spas, canals and other bodies of water made inaccessible to children.

Annual visits are not only a time to conduct home inspections, but also a time to consult and work with your LPA regarding any future goals or discuss placements. Your LPA is there to support and advocate for you. Please feel free to call your LPA with any questions. -Laura Estrada, MA



## 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. We will attempt to provide a profile of a Marin Children and Family Services social worker each month. Anyone with a suggestion of a social worker to be interviewed can contact Jonathan Toste at: [jjtoste@gmail.com](mailto:jjtoste@gmail.com).

**Social Worker:** *Tawnya Stansell, MSW  
Child Welfare Worker Ongoing Unit*

### **Why did you choose to be a social worker?**

I obtained my undergraduate degree through Friends World Program of Long Island University which focused on experiential learning through community involvement and cross cultural experiences. I studied in Central America, East Africa and Europe, as an intern. My best experiences were working with children. Originally, I don't think I chose to be a social worker, but the opportunity presented itself when I began job searching. I was hired as a Socio-therapist for a therapeutic foster care agency in New York City. My job duties included making weekly visits to the foster homes and charting behavioral problems and interventions as well as intensive one-on-one time the children spent with their caregivers. I liked the frequency of the visits and working with the caregivers to try to trouble-shoot behaviors that were getting in the way of the children's success. I don't believe I would have been hired into that position without my internship experiences abroad and the writing skills that my undergraduate program required.

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

I spent several years working as a counselor in residential treatment programs with pre-adolescent and teen boys while getting my MA in Psychology/Art Therapy from Sonoma State University. While residential work can be stressful, I miss those days of spending afternoons with the kids in the art room, playing baseball and basketball, and just hanging out. I can't say enough about the importance group activities are for children, in terms of learning to work together and resolve disputes in a respectful manner. I recently had the opportunity to meet up with one of the children (now an adult!) that I had worked with in residential treatment, and I was thrilled to see how well he is doing and hear his reflections on his time at the treatment program. Once I obtained my MA, I decided it was time to return to work within the foster care system. I worked for the Oregon Department of Human Services for 3.5 years as both licensing/adoption worker and ongoing case worker. My husband had an employment opportunity that brought us back to California, and, after a brief break to spend some time at home with my two sons, I began working for Marin County in the Ongoing Unit nearly three years ago.

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

My favorite part of my job is closing cases! I like feeling a family I've worked with has gained the tools necessary to function without ongoing support. It's especially gratifying when the family is thankful for our intervention and let's us know. I like it when I can spend quality time with the parents on my caseload, so they really get the sense we are working together with the same goals in mind. It is frustrating when I feel I am working harder and am

more motivated than the parents to stabilize their families. It is also frustrating when teens are making bad life choices and are unable to see their own potential. Another challenging aspect of this job can be the "blame game." We have to coordinate with many involved people (Parents, foster parents, attorneys, therapists, educators, CASAs, Treatment Counselors, SSW-visit supervisors, daycare providers, medical providers, etc) and that can sometimes make things complicated. When an event doesn't go smoothly, I think it's better to look at how to make future improvements, rather than trying to pinpoint blame.

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

I enjoy getting updates from foster parents on how the children are doing in their homes—the positive as well as the negative. I'm always thankful to the foster parents who work with teens and are able to get them focused on college and beyond. I think Marin County has exceptional foster parents who are invested in improving the lives of the children in their care. Sometimes the stories of the children and families involved with our Department can seem shocking, but when you take the time to get to know everyone as individuals, it is incredibly rewarding. I would encourage foster parents to meet the parents of the children in their care, if the opportunity arises. There is less internal conflict for the children when their foster care providers and parents are able to interact and communicate back and forth. Thanks for everything you do as foster parents!



# Foster Parent Profile



Foster Parent Profiles is overseen by MFPA Vice President Jonathan

Toste. The project goal is to help share information about foster parenting and to bring foster parents together. A profile of a Marin foster parent will be shared each month. Anyone wishing to contribute as either an interviewer or interviewee can contact Jonathan at: [jjtoste@gmail.com](mailto:jjtoste@gmail.com).

Foster Parent: *Hawa Harris*  
Interviewer: *Jonathan Toste*

## Why did you choose to be a foster parent?

I moved from Liberia, West Africa in 1987 and am very fascinated with television news and other programs that focus on life here in America - in Liberia, we relate to one another and within our families very different than what I was seeing on television. I noticed how many children do not get a proper, loving childhood and how many children end up in the streets and in foster care. That is what convinced me to become a foster parent and help those children.

## What is your background and what do you do for a living?

I was born into a family of eight children and raised in Liberia, which has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest population growth rate in the world. Greed for power was changing the political situation rapidly in

1987, and I had family here in California. So, I left my 3-year-old daughter with my mom and moved here. I found I really liked it in California. Ten years later, the Liberian political situation went from bad to very dangerous, so I returned to get my daughter, who was by then 13, and raised her and my two younger sons, who were born here in Marin County. My biological children are 26, 18 and 8 and are all living at home.

I studied accounting in college in Africa. Now, I am a medical assistant. I have a degree in Natural Science and am preparing for a nursing program.

## What particular skills of yours transfer to being a good foster parent?

Patience is probably my most transferable skill. I have been a licensed foster parent since 2006 and have fostered 7 children, including one in my care now. Psychology classes and nursing skills have really been helpful in my ability to be a better foster parent. I don't push my Pentecostal religion, African cuisine or other beliefs on my kids. I've adapted my cooking to what my kids like to eat ("American" food) - and find that my kids really respect me for that.

## Is there anything in particular you want to share with other foster parents?

Number one: when kids are angry or

argumentative, I do not engage with them. When they calm down, I go to their room and talk to them. I also always find ways to compliment my kids - sometimes it is very difficult to find something nice to complement them with!

You have to know and love kids to be a good foster parent - some people have the technical skills and "an idea" of what is needed - but that is not enough. Love is a deep feeling and understanding and accepting a child's inherent psychology - requires a deep love to stay firm and patient and to go that extra mile to help them understand the growing pains of life.

## What 5 attributes best describe you?

Loving, patient, appreciative, complementary and happy - which is probably why I've been told, I have an infectious laugh.

*Hawa was a wonderful person to interview - her accent and her deep hearty laugh could make the Grinch a happy critter. She promises to come to the January Meet and Eat. Come join us.*

It's Time to Renew Your MFPA Membership!!  
if you aren't a Member—Join Us Now!

Our new Membership Chairperson, Kathryn Jordan-Whittle, mailed out membership applications and emailed them to everyone, so you should have the application (and an addressed envelope) at your fingertips. If you did not receive one via either of these methods, please contact Kathryn at 898-5677.

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.



## Holiday Soup Group—I.E. Caroling Party on Elvia Court

Mimi Katz (myself) hosted the annual Christmas Caroling Party in December and tho scantily attended it was a lot of fun as usual. We dispersed a load of gift donations including books and PJs from the Pajama Project to the kids in attendance, ate pizza and drank delicious hot cocoa with marshmallows and whipped cream. There was no Soup Group in December to allow myself lots of extra time to prepare for the hoards and hoards of people I knew would attend the Caroling event, and Wow-oh-Wow what an amazing night it was! Six reindeer showed up (Fortunately, we didn't need Rudolph's red light since it was a clear night, because he didn't come - he must have been with the other folks who "forgot" about our magic evening of music and mischief), and we headed down Elvia Court's hill with about 13 happy kids and almost a dozen adults, all singing

off-key and in crazy hats and full of merriment. The reindeer joined in and tho they had absolutely terrible singing voices, no one even noticed as we had Jonathan Toste The Snowman leading the group off-key and warbly!!!! Wendy Crowell and her youngster were sparring as usual. Newly licensed foster parent, Maxeen Olenberg came to join the fun but didn't sing with us as she only knew Channukah songs, and we didnt have any in our song books! Even little Addie arrived towing Laura Paul, full of enthusiasm for Pizza Pizza Pizza. We sang out there in the dark and cold for almost an hour. My neighbors really loved it—some even joined in with us! Then we came back to the house to play and eat sweets and consume massive amounts of chocolate, homemade cookies and treats and fattening whip cream. The party didnt wind down till after 9 pm, and some major bonding went on amongst the kids. And that's what it is all about!

I look forward to reconvening Soup Group in 2010 and hope to see everybody on Friday, January 29th, 12-2pm for some yummy soup. I am still working on the soup menu but I can assure you it will be something creative. I will have a quick luncheon here and then off to the airport to visit my daughter in San Diego. So come on over and have a quick bowl of soup, kids welcome, and no clean up required. We'll be discussing future soup group configurations as we will invite CFS staff to our soup groups occassionally. So be sure to read your newsletters, folks at CFS, so you'll know which upcoming soup group you can slurp soup and play with babies and eat mystery brownies with the awesome foster parents of Marin! If you have questions—call me at 492-0207. -Mimi Katz

### 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  
479-0357  
andreapino@comcast.net

Carol Ihlenburg, Treasurer  
507-1822  
cihlenburg@comcast.net

### 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!