



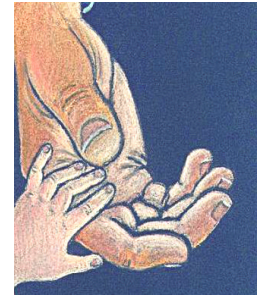
CHAPTER 9

MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

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

(415) 507-0557

www.mfpa.net



Issue 70

June 22, 2009

MFPA June 2009 Newsletter



This year's 7th Annual Marin Foster Parent Association's picnic was a blast! Although the weather wasn't as warm as in year's past, everyone enjoyed a fun and entertaining afternoon. The addition of a dunk tank was a smashing success. The adults as well as the children enjoyed watching social workers, foster parents and parents get dunked. The Marinwood Fire Department came by for the kids to get a look inside their fire engine and to run through the water from their fire hose.

Andrea Pino created some awesome body art for both

adults and kids, and Donna Shadowen made some super cool balloon accessories. There were some enthusiastic childcare supervisors to make sure none of the children got lost or hurt (thanks, Portia, Ali and Molly). Everyone was in good spirits and the socializing amongst all was in abundance. The original goal of this event was to bring social workers and foster parents together in a relaxed and fun setting with the children. I personally felt this



goal was accomplished this year. In order to make this happen, a lot of work and generosity occurs behind the scenes. I will attempt to thank all who assisted in this year's event, and, please

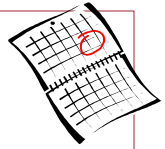
accept my apologies if I forget someone—believe me, your efforts are greatly appreciated! The picnic committee consisted of social service's workers headed up by Kimberly Contreras to set up the event: Rob Thomas, Tony Milani, Kathryn Nishimura, Haley Mears, Summer Medina and Nancy Tranchina; Foster parents Mimi Katz, Rachel Norman, Karen Baumann, Chris Andrews, Jonathan Toste, Vidette Poe, Andrea Pino and Wendy Crowell assisted with obtaining donations, picking up donations, set up and clean up. Additional help was provided by Katy Tiemann and Laurie Good from CASA and Janet Cameron. The dunk tank volunteers were all great sports—Rob Thomas, Tony Milani, Lourdes Vargas, David Slotterback, Cesar Lagleva, Claudia Asprer, and Marvin Urroz. This has always been one of my favorite MFPA events, and I have had the pleasure of chairing it since it's inception 7 year's ago. I have always had great volunteers help make it a successful and fun event for everyone. Next year, I have a graduating senior (high school), so I will not be able to chair the picnic. If anyone is interested in doing this, I have tried to keep everything organized, so it would

be easy for someone else to take over in my absence. Please contact me if you are up to the task! Thank you to the generous donations received from the following local businesses: Comforts, Marin Joes, California Pizza Kitchen, Whole Foods, Silbermanns Ice Cream, the Jelly Belly Factory, Astro Jump, Craig's Warehouse, Round Table Pizza, Children and Family Services, Safeway and Costco. Have a wonderful and safe summer!

-Carol Ihlenburg, 2009 MFPA Picnic Chair



Upcoming Events



- ❖ **June 26:** Soup Group, 12-2, San Rafael
- ❖ **July 20-24:** Fire Squirts Camp, Novato
- ❖ **August 29:** CPR and 1st Aid, COM, Novato

For information on any of the above events, contact Carol Ihlenburg or go to our web-site 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!



Foster Care Collaborative Update

We had a productive meeting on May 28th. As mentioned in the last newsletter, the meeting was a continuation of previous discussions on foster parent and social worker expectations of each other. It was a productive meeting with great suggestions from the group. Due to the busy summer season, we will not be meeting until sometime late summer. We will notify you of the date and time of the next meeting when it is scheduled. Have a fun and safe summer!

Welcome New Foster Parents

Marin County Children and Family Services is pleased to welcome the agency's newest foster family. **Alissa and Michael Ralston** live in a spacious five-bedroom home in Terra Linda and are eager to provide emergency foster care to girls and boys ages ten and older. Parents of three grown children and grandparents of one young grandchild, Alissa and Mike are eager to apply their experiences, wisdom, resourcefulness and desire to be of service to their new roles as foster parents. Licensed for two, they will be included in the emergency foster parent rotation; they might also consider other short-term placements. A retired medical doctor (with years of experience as an internist and urgent care physician as well as a high-ranking administrator,) Mike remains active in the field; he volunteers with such organizations as the Marin Organizing committee (chairing the Healthcare Research team) and with the Rotacare free clinic at Kaiser. Alissa works part-time as a health educator in the field of tobacco prevention and cessation. Her interests include yoga, hiking, spending time with friends, engaging in all kinds of water sports, reading and weaving. An outdoor enthusiast who enjoys hiking and bicycling, Mike's interests also include watercolor painting, reading and golf. The Ralstons are responsible, reliable people who are motivated to offer a safe home and a nurturing environment to children in the child welfare system. We at MCFCS appreciate their dedication to children and youth in need, and are very grateful for their many skills, strong enthusiasm and caring nature. - *Cindy Wasserman, MSW, Licensing Social Worker*

Upcoming Hula Hoop—Jump Rope A Thon



This year, the Marin Foster Parent Association's fundraiser will be a Hula Hoop/Jumprope A-Thon. It will be held Saturday, August 15th from 9-10 AM at the Civic Center Lagoon in San Rafael. We need LOTS of participation!!! Get your hips and feet in shape for an hour of fun to raise money for our association. A flyer with sponsor form is included with this newsletter. If you and/or your child/ren would like to participate, give us a call at 507-0557 and start getting your sponsors! If you would rather not participate but would like to help by finding sponsors for those who do participate, that will work too! We will have sample letters to mail or email to friends and family also—just let us know what level of participation you'd like to be at, and we'll make it happen. We're looking forward to a fun hour of hula hooping and jump roping with you!



MFPA Summary of the Year From The Vice President

It is summer break for our kids and for us on the Marin Foster Parent Association Board - No newsletter next month and monthly "Eat and Meet"s will resume in September - wheeee.

A nice time to recuperate from the past year's wonderful cycle of monthly "Eat and Meets" (free dinner/training sessions for our members and the community), Friday Soup Group lunch gatherings, Executive Board meetings, Foster Care Collaborative meetings, holiday party planning, summer picnic planning and SOON a Hula Hoop/Jumprope-A-Thon to help fix our budget crises. Yes, we were supposed to rest, but couldn't resist one fun summer event for us to gather together - like we really wanted something else to plan while on summer "break" - but it's Hula Hoop/Jump Rope or go bankrupt.

We want to thank all of you who read this newsletter for your support, ideas and contributions. We don't understand why more of you don't come to our awesome Eat and Meet trainings - i.e. free dinner, child care, awesome speakers (3 programs in a row

on child development - wow, how interesting - the varied aspects on brain development and how to shape it - before it is too late) - well those of you who did come to those monthly evenings know how great it was.

MFPA President Vidette Poe adds, "The collaborative meetings we had with Social Services really turned the corner this year, in my mind, for creating positive bonds and improved communication. The people who benefit the most are those who come to the meetings and get to develop more personalized understanding of each other."

The MFPA board is aware of and is exploring the reasons for the current decrease in the detention of children in our county. We have and continue to obtain statistical data on this current trend not only in Marin County but those around us. Our board has reviewed the information and discussed what we can do about curbing the increase in violence and incarceration among youth and the related decrease of removal of children from problem households.

Our membership continues to be strong. We currently have a total membership of 41. Not bad considering there are currently 50 licensed foster homes through the Marin County licensing department. We'd love to reach 50—so, if you aren't currently a member, please consider supporting our organization. Membership assists with the costs of your receiving the monthly newsletter and the events hosted for foster families such as the annual holiday party and summer picnic.

So back to the Hula: JUST SAY YES when asked to help with this fundraiser!! Whether it is with a twenty or hundred-dollar donation - just pitch in and make this work. Ask a few friends and/or relatives to give you twenty dollars to Hula-hoop for our kids. And then come out for an hour of food, fun and camaraderie at the lovely Civic Center Park on Saturday August 15th from 9 to 10 AM. See you there.

Have a wonderful summer! Luck, life and light - *Jonathan Toste, MFPA Vice-President*

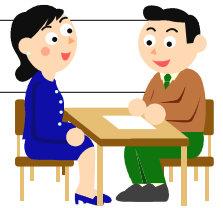
Bay Area Foster Parent Association Meeting Scheduled

The Marin Foster Parent Association is happy to announce we will be hosting, in cooperation with the College of Marin Foster and Kinship Care Education Program, a Bay Area Foster Parent Association meeting on September 19, 2009 in San Rafael. We are inviting 4-5 representatives from each of the nine bay area counties to join us for a round table style discussion/meeting. Each county will share successes they've experienced and two challenges in the arena of providing foster care and support to foster families. We hope to be able to learn from each other in an effort to assist all Bay Area Foster Parent Associations to be successful.





Social Worker Profile



Social Worker Profiles is something the MFPA thought would be of

interest to the foster parent community. We hope it 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.

Social Worker: *Cindy Wasserman, MSW/Child Welfare Worker II*
Position: *DHHS, Children & Family Services, Child Welfare Worker*
Interviewer: *Kim Pollak*

Why did you choose to be a social worker?

I come from a family comprised of social workers, a therapist and a psychologist so I guess you could say it's in my blood. Although at one time I anticipated becoming a journalist (to break rank?), but social work appealed to me more. My father had a significant intellectual influence on me during my teen and young adult years: a therapist who was also very political, he not only opened my eyes to many of the injustices in our society, but inspired me to question and understand the power structure and institutionalized prejudices which give rise to the challenges so many of us face. Although my work is not currently political as such, it is informed by my interests in society, one's community and the family as much as the individual. I chose social work because it affords me the chance to work with children and adults who are often engaged in struggles that are both personal and sociological in nature, and to try to help make a difference.

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

I earned a bachelor's degree in sociology and women's studies at UC Santa Cruz and later earned a master's degree in social work at San Francisco State University. I worked for three years in special education, primarily with autistic youth. Over the course of the next eighteen years or so, I worked at Marin Abused Women's Services (MAWS) in various capacities, Homeward Bound of Marin, Marin AIDS Project and finally, here at CFS. I have been working here on a half-time basis, for about ten years.

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

The rewards are many since I get to work with people who have their hearts in the right place and who want to take on the difficult role of fostering other parents' children. I find it incredibly inspiring to work alongside foster and foster-adopt parents who are there to meet the needs of these kids, all the while navigating their way through the bureaucracy and tending to the many other aspects of their professional and personal lives. My son is now twelve and I am familiar with many of the dramas and joys of parenting, but while I care for a single child, so many foster parents are caring for many; I am moved by their dedication and energy. I would say the most rewarding part of my work is when a coworker tells me what a fantastic job a foster or foster-adopt parent is doing, or when a foster parent lets me know things are going well, and they are feeling effective (maybe even confident) during a placement. It also brightens my whole week when a foster-adopt parent whom I licensed sends me

photos of their child. Another rewarding aspect of this role is the candid and detailed manner in which applicants engage during the home study process. I am honored that people welcome me into their homes and share their amazing stories with me; it is a position of privilege to be privy to their insights and values. The challenging part is recruiting enough qualified foster parents. There has always been an emphasis on keeping families intact when it is safe to do so, but today fewer children are removed. It is a constant challenge to license enough new foster parents so that we can guarantee children will be matched with homes close enough to their schools, and with families who will welcome children of different ages and are well suited to meet each child's particular needs. .

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

Thank you!!! Your generosity of spirit, time, energy, insights and leadership are greatly appreciated by the entire staff here at CFS. This work would come to a standstill if it weren't for you. I love hearing from you all, even if it has been a long time since I (or somebody preceding me) licensed you. Please let me know if you have ideas about how the application and licensing process may be improved, based on your experiences. Also, foster parents are often the best recruiters, so I welcome any ideas you might have along those lines as well; please be sure to tell me if you are interested in co-presenting with me at an upcoming information meeting.

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 Group Choir

We have organized and begun practicing our performance skills as the Marin County Foster Parent Soup Group Choir, and we promise to be a raging success. I always get such a lovely turnout at soup group. The most enthusiastic and forward thinking parents with always a thought for good works and lending a helping hand. I figured I could organize a Choir, and we could do performances at all the Social Service events. We just had the annual Meet And Greet, and what a wonderful addition we could have been to that affair if we had been "up and running." Then there was the Annual Foster Parent Picnic....Oh the opportunities are endless! We might even pull it together and perform Sunday Mornings at the Farmer's Market. In attendance were Christine Andrews, who brought her daughter Sarah and little Lily, Laura Paul with Carl, Karen

Bauman, Rachel Norman, Sharon Skolnick-Bagnoli, Peggy Byrne, Jocelyn Bell (leading the choir), Monica Walsh, Linda Gregory, Vidette Poe, Sherry Difranza, Kathryn Burns, and myself, Mimi Katz. I provided Choir Robes in Rainbow colors, and two fabulous soups. We ate Sentimental Lentil with Little Lamb Meatballs and a fresh Summer Vegetables with Basil and Garlic a plenty with lots of French bread and butter, and chocolate brownies for dessert. We sang for an hour before I let anyone eat, and the selections included show tunes, gospel selections, and we tried our luck with some rockin' old Motown numbers. They were definitely the best, as we have great harmony and the dance routines were really easy to put together. We have Rhythm!!! We tried a few Beatles tunes but everyone wanted to keep going back to the Motown. Oh well, the era was fabulous, wasn't it? Really, we touched on dealing with kids who are very 'self-entitled', how to set limits for the 'spoiled generation', what can be defined as 'discipline', and how to set clearer limits for the kids who come into our homes in a combination with limits we set for our own kids. This is often a real difficulty, and we all seem to grapple with where to draw the line, especially with the teens. We talked about alternative healing methods, and how to make our kids feel healthy and strong. I notice that children in placement are very often complaining of illness that is perceived, and not real. We had lively discussions going on around the table all afternoon. The food and company was very enjoyable. Join us in June for the next rehearsal and meal together- the last Friday of the month, - June 26th at noon. I will have hula hoops and jumpropes on hand so we can all practice for the upcoming MFPA fundraiser on August 15th (after soup—BEFORE dessert). -Mimi Katz

2009 MFPA Executive Board Members

Vidette Poe, President
465-4622
vpoe99@yahoo.com

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

Andrea Pino, Secretary
479-0357
andreapino@comcast.net

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

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



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!