



CHAPTER 9

# MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

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

(415) 507-0557

www.mfpa.net



Issue 78  
March 19, 2010



## MFPA March 2010 Newsletter

Spring has sprung! Although the amount of rain we've received this year allows us to relax a little bit without facing another "drought" year, it is nice to get some good 'ol Vitamin D! The Marin Foster Parent Association has been, and continues to be, busy looking for ways to improve and assist the lives of foster families. We received many donations this month — read the "Donation Closet" article for what is available for foster children. We are also preparing to participate in the Marin Human Race this year on May 8th. See the Marin Human Race article for details and how you can assist and/or participate in the only scheduled fundraiser for our association this year. We have begun planning for this year's annual picnic. Mark your calendars now for June 18th! It should be a great day of fun. We will, once again, have a dunk tank manned with social worker and foster parent volunteers up for the dunking! If you would like to volunteer (if it's a hot day, this is a great way to cool off!), please contact either Kim Contreras (social workers) or Carol Ihlenburg (foster parents). Lastly, we are actively researching available grants for funding to assist foster families with needs such as extracurricular activities, tutoring and respite care. If you know of any opportunities or can assist with grant writing, please contact a board member.

Although one of our featured speakers was MIA at this month's Meet and Eat, the evening was informative and enjoyable. The food was a big hit as well—chicken from Sol Food was the featured food of the evening! Micki Keno, County Counsel (i.e. attorney for the Department of Health and Human Services Children and Family Services) talked about her job and the difficulties she faces interacting with the various dependency courtroom players and some of the legal barriers in place that make sharing information with foster parents sometimes difficult. She encouraged foster parents to join forces to revise some of the legal parameters on who has access to what information. Dulce McAllister was also there to answer questions concerning the role of the social worker in the court process. Commissioner Goldfine sends his apologies for missing the evening and promises to attend an upcoming meeting (as one of the attendees versus the featured speaker). Next month's Meet and Eat will be held April 13th. See attached flyer for details. -Carol Ihlenburg, MFPA Newsletter Editor

### Upcoming Events

- ❖ **March 23:** Kids, Parents, and Power Struggles: Secrets of Effective Discipline, Larkspur, 7-9 PM 
- ❖ **March 26:** Soup Group, San Rafael, 12—2 PM
- ❖ **March 27:** Foster A Dream 1st Quarter Distribution Day, Martinez, 10AM—2PM
- ❖ **April 1:** MFPA Executive Board meeting, San Rafael, 10AM-12PM
- ❖ **April 1:** O.C.E.D. (On Call Emergency Duty) Training, San Rafael, 6-8:30PM
- ❖ **April 13:** MFPA monthly Meet and Eat, San Rafael, 6—8:30 PM
- ❖ **April 13:** Chase Finney, Marin Education Fund/College Access, San Rafael, 10-11 AM
- ❖ **May 25:** Meet and Greet, San Rafael, 4-6PM
- ❖ **June 18:** MFPA 8th Annual Foster Family and Social Worker Picnic, San Rafael, 12:30—3PM
- ❖ **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](http://www.mfpa.net).

### Soup Group Training Hours Clarification

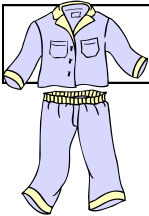
We have further examined our policy on the number of annual training hours a foster parent may receive from a support group such as soup group. While we would like to change our policy to count only two hours of support group, this is a state-approved policy and it would be a lengthy process to alter it at this point. So our decision is that while we would recommend foster parents only count 2 soup group hours toward their annual training requirement, we will honor all requests to count 3 hours, counting one hour per soup group session. Please let me know if you have any questions.

-Bree Marchman, MSW, Marin County Children and Family Services, Adoption/Licensing Unit Supervisor, (415) 473-7136

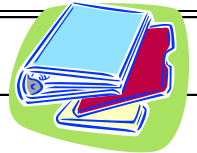
# Funding for Tutoring and After School Enrichment Programs



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 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!

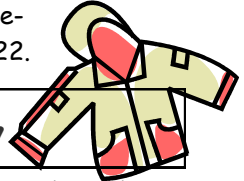


## MFPA Donation Closet



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.



## Foster A Dream 1st Quarter Distribution Day

Foster A Dream would like to invite the Marin County Foster Parent Association members to our *1st Quarter Distribution Day* to benefit foster children. At this special event, foster children will be able to receive NEW Jackets, Pajamas, Clothing Items, and Pillow Pals!!! We will also be giving out Family Packs that contain games, arts & crafts, and school supplies.

DATE: Saturday, March 27th, 2010

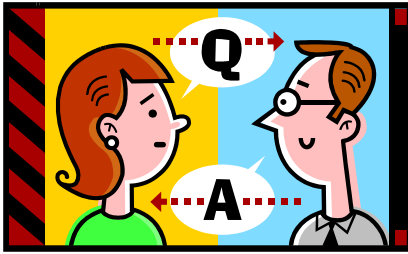
TIME: Doors will be open from 10am-2pm

LOCATION: Foster A Dream Office: 4585 Pacheco Blvd, #110, Martinez

To sign-up, please contact Carol Ihlenburg at 507-1822, or email: [cihlenburg@comcast.net](mailto:cihlenburg@comcast.net) with the following information: 1) Your Name, 2) Contact phone number, and 3) Number of foster children including gender & age. Foster families must be on the registration list to attend and receive items. Our *Distribution Day* is made possible through our partnership with "Sleep Train Foster Kids", local Community Associations and Foster A Dream volunteers.

Thank you for your continued support of children living in foster care. -Tamara Earl, Program Manager Foster A Dream

**Rebecca Sanford**, Program Manager at Children and Family Services is retiring after 20 plus years of work in child welfare! Her last day will be March 26, 2010. Rebecca started out in child welfare working for Los Angeles County in Emergency Response Services. For the last 14 years, she has worked with children and families in Marin County in various capacities including Emergency Response worker, Court Officer, Supervisor, and Program Manager for Emergency Response and Continuing Services Units. Her many contributions to this county include her work with the Jeanette Prandi Center, initially helping with fund raising and start up activities, and then serving as a child sexual abuse forensic interviewer. For the last couple of years, she has served on the Multidisciplinary team in Marin City. She would like to express the following to foster parents and community partners: "I have enjoyed working with many of you in various arenas. I have great respect for your personal and professional choice to work with vulnerable children and families. I will miss working with all of you and I wish you the best in your continued effort to better the lives of children and families in Marin County". We want to wish Rebecca the best in retirement and thank you for all you've done to improve the lives of children and families in our community. You can reach Rebecca at 473-6179 if you'd like to wish her well on her new life adventure!



## Foster Parents Want to Know...

We will be hosting a monthly column for foster parents to ask questions about providing foster care. Kelly Reiter, Certified Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) from Family and Children Law Center and Bree Marchman, Unit Supervisor of Adoption and Licensing at Children and Family Services have volunteered to provide responses via our newsletter. If you have a question you'd like to ask, please submit to [cihlenburg@comcast.net](mailto:cihlenburg@comcast.net) or call 507-0557.

**Question:** When a foster parent takes a placement, there is a placement agreement filled out and signed by the social worker and foster parent. This agreement spells out the provision of care as well as the parameters of how notice would be given to end the placement and payment for care. Payment is made at the beginning of the month for the care provided the month previously.

However, this frequently does not happen. The workers who place the

child claim that everything is in place, and that payments are on the way. When payments do not come, it is blamed on Eligibility workers, who are from a different department that the social workers have no control over. When pushed, it sometimes turns out that a form was filled out incorrectly and was sitting on a desk somewhere, and nobody had reported the problem. Sometimes the problems go on for months, where payment is reported to be taken care of, and yet it is not.

In addition to the time involved, foster children can be a substantial expense, and we often budget expecting to be paid as specified in the agreement. Not receiving these payments is a hardship. Are these agreements binding in any way, and what recourse is there when months pass without payment being made?

**Answer (Provided by Paula Robertson, Program Manager II, Marin County Children and Family Services):** Money is often difficult to talk about so I am happy to have an opportunity to discuss this. Let me state right off that the Agency - Foster Parents Agreement is a con-

tract between Social Services and the Foster Parent. It is certainly binding and you should expect payment as stated in the contract. It is very important to this agency that foster parents are paid on time. We strive to make sure you are paid and hope that late payments are a rare occurrence. In looking at the Agency Foster Parents Agreement it states that the agency will pay within 45 days of an initial placement and no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month following care thereafter. So if a child is placed June 10<sup>th</sup>, you should have payment by July 25<sup>th</sup>. Monthly payments after the initial payment should come before the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. As foster parents if you do not receive payment on time, you should always call the assigned Social Worker and report the problem. As the manager over Child Welfare, I would also ask that you call me at 473-7125. Not only can this phone call help on your particular issue, it also assists us to know that there is a systematic problem that must be attended to. Other advocates you can call for assistance include the State Foster Care Ombudsman at 1-877-846-1602, or Advokids at 1-877-ADV4KID.

## 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 non profit 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](mailto:gia-clay@yahoo.com) or at the MHR website: [www.marinhumanrace.org](http://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!





## 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](mailto:jjtoste@gmail.com).

**Social Worker:** *Dulce McAllister, Social Services Unit Supervisor*

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

In 1988, I was working in the HIV/Aids program (and had already been working for the County of Marin since 1986), when I saw a job announcement for a Support Service Worker (SSW) in CPS. A light went off in my head, and I knew at that very moment that Child Welfare was the field I wanted to make a career out of and that I wanted to become the best social worker there was. I was idealistic and naïve to believe I would save the world. I was 28 at the time. There was no competition when I applied. In those days, I was the only SSW and parents received only a one hour visit per week, no matter the age of the child or how many kids and no sib visits. I never worked past 5pm. I held that position for 2.5 years.

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

I earned my B.A. in Sociology and Spanish literature from UC Santa Barbara in 1983. After graduating, I worked as an IHHS provider to an elderly woman in Marin. I then worked for Planned Parenthood in SF before becoming a supervisor at the Marin clinic. I knew that I wanted to make a change, but I did not know exactly in what specific field. I applied for a Human Relations Worker with the County of Marin in 1986, earning \$6.36/hr. A huge salary cut from my previous position, but somehow I

knew it would lead to bigger and better things. In 1991, I became a Child Welfare Worker I (the elusive trainee position which only lasted 2 years) in the Ongoing Unit, and shortly thereafter had my one and only daughter (who is now a sophomore at Cal State in Long Beach). I became a CWWII in 1993 through 2002 when I was promoted to my current Supervisor position. Little did I know that I would remain in H & HS for a total of 24 years and counting—in CPS for 22 of those years!

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

There are many rewarding parts of my work. Having parents call years later or bumping into them (which can also be challenging with some) and tell me they are still clean and sober, and I helped them along the way. Mentoring new social workers and being proud of them as I watch them grow into the incredible social workers they are. Last, seeing our teens emancipate and go to college (on scholarship with ILP's assistance) and, when reunification is not possible, seeing children adopted by wonderful adoptive parents who will provide them with lives free from abuse and neglect.

The most challenging part is the court environment that is so contentious with the attorneys. There are many positive outcomes and when we are on the same side as the children's attorney and CASA, things go more smoothly; however, not always with the parent's attorneys. Most of the court cases are contested at every juncture. Social workers put a tremendous amount of work into preparing and writing the reports and testifying in court while at the same time still providing services and returning phone calls on other cases. Having been a former social worker, I can totally empathize and feel their pain.

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

We could not do our jobs without the foster parents. You have the most challenging aspect having "our" kids placed in your homes with your families. Many of these children have special needs: medical/dental, behavioral, educational, and emotional. I can imagine how difficult it is to have a child placed in your home—sometimes not knowing anything about them. Then, after you develop a relationship with the child and he/she becomes part of your family, and you have to let go when they return home, move to a permanent home or move to a different foster home. I am excited about some changes planned to help bridge the gap between CFS and foster parents. One is Ice Breaker meetings which will occur between CFS, foster parent(s), and the biological parent(s) to gather information from the parents about their child[ren] shortly after a child is placed. Research shows there are positive outcomes using this approach. In some cases, we will also have Placement Review meetings with the ER SW, the Ongoing SW, and the foster parent to review the Case Plan for the child. Some foster parents are not able to provide transportation for foster children to and from visits, school and medical/dental appointments for various reasons. If you are able to provide transportation for these appointments, we strongly encourage you to do so as this is a basic requirement expected of foster parents. When it is not possible to provide transportation, please let the SW know, and we will work it out. THANK YOU to all of you who are doing this incredible and most needed job to provide care to the neediest children of our community.

# Chronicles of Adoption by Jonathan Toste

*Chronicles of adoption was created to present the gnawing questions that haunt the lives of children, adolescents and adults of broken homes. It is an attempt by the MFPA to outline the issues that children battle with, in order to create better foster parenting. Please contact us if you or someone you know, has a fostered or adopted past and may be willing to be interviewed. Names are kept confidential. Contact: [jjtoste@gmail.com](mailto:jjtoste@gmail.com)*

## **What history do you know about your biological family?**

The Mendocino County Court awarded legal guardianship of me to my grandparents when I was 8 months old. My mom was 19 at the time, and my dad was 18. My mom was marginally in my life until I was 2. She then moved two thousand miles away to Anchorage Alaska, where she married a man who was affiliated with the Jehovah Witness Church. After divorcing him, she remarried two more times and had four children. I didn't see her again until I was 15 and then only briefly. My dad was always in my life, but I never lived with him. He re-married and had two more children. I'm now 33 years old.

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

I was always reassured, by both my grandparents and uncles that I was raised with that being abandoned by my mom was not my fault! Kids at school taunted me that my mom left me because I was ugly. Time and time again my uncles (12 and 15 years older than me) told me that I was NOT imperfect

or bad and that I was too young to have been the reason for the abandonment. As I got older and got into a bit of trouble, my grandma and grandpa made it clear to me that my home was at their house and they would not send me back to live with my dad. It also helped that my dad told me that he agreed that my grandparents could give me a much better life than he could. He explained how, at age 18, he made so little money that he could never have afforded me anything but a horrible life.

One very scary time was when I was 14 and my grandparents dropped me off at my dad's. I had gotten into some big trouble the week before and I was sure the drop off "weekend visit" was a scheme to leave me there for good. My dad's house was real messy and dirty, there were all kinds of strangers coming and going, and I witnessed a lot of drug use. My grandparents had reassured me that they would be back for me, but the weekend was a psychological nightmare. When my grandparents arrived to pick me up on Sunday night, I was never happier to see them. After that it really sunk in that my home was with them and they would never send me away to live with my mom or dad.

## **What kind of "fantasy option" (not totally unrealistic) do you wish was available to you to solve the biggest issues you faced growing up?**

I used to watch Oprah on TV, and often had entertained the fantasy that she would host my mom, and Oprah and I would get my mom to answer the ques-

tions that had always haunted me: "Why me? Why did you keep your other children and abandon me? Why didn't you talk to me for 13 years? Why won't you answer my questions? Why couldn't I call you? Why didn't you send me a birthday card - even though I sent you one? (Our birthdays were just a few days apart)"

Another dream I had was of a "secret agent" - like a psychologist/detective, that would contact my mom and "coach" the answers to my questions out of her. Some years back, I realized my mom was never going to answer my questions. I told her I was finished asking them, and she would have to come forward with some clear answers before I would ever seek her out again. Now my wife and I are foster parents to a 6 year old who has been separated from his parents since he was 4 ½. My wife also has issues of abandonment buried in her past and we are engaging in giving back to a child and to society the same kind of love that we managed to collect from broken pasts.

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

I guess it would be that my life has taught me to be patient and to stick with things. I met my wife when we were in third grade. We've been together for 15 years and married for 8 years.

## **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](mailto: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.



## Chili Time

Tired of the dull and boring soup program, I broke out of the rut and made Chili for Soup Group in February. I produced three varieties, and they were killer. A vegetarian, chock full of fresh veggies, a Turkey Three Bean Chili, and a Spicy Beef and Bean Classic to burn the roofs of the mouth. And we did! We sprinkled grated cheese or sour cream or salsa on top, ate corn bread and scarfed cheesecake for dessert. It was a heavy meal, and anyone who needed to rush home and make dinner after that high-carb meal....I pity! In attendance were the usuals: Vidette Poe, Laura and John Abramson, Linda Gregory with husband Jeff Grey in tow, Laura Paul, Barbara Ahern, Maxeen Olenberg, Rachel Norman, Sharon Skolnick-Bagnoli, Christine Andrews, and my hungry self as a late-comer. I had an appointment elsewhere, so I left my house empty, and Vidette came over and hosted the first half hour. There were no glitches! Maybe we will have soup group at her house next month. I originally invited social workers to

soup group next month, but they have another luncheon and cannot make it. I had lined up the Chippendales for a repeat performance cuz they heard the SW's were coming. I have decided NOT to cancel them, so expect lots of fun at the March event, last Friday of the month. As a matter of fact, I had mentioned it to the Harley Group also and they wanted to meet the social workers too, so they are coming and may dance for us too. (they are terrible dancers tho) And the Old Ladies Knitting Group from the Sewing Shoppe in Corte Madera was interested in soups also ( and dancing too) so they may all be here to meet social workers who cannot make it for lunch. Oh well, I will make a lot of soup, get out the dancing shoes and g-strings and we will just have a rockin' ole time. On a serious note, we did talk about nurturing the foster parent, health and well-being techniques, and how to factor in enough exercise when you have placements. We talked about transitioning kids out and away and how to cope with the loss and sadness when a placement ends for us. Somehow we tend to still get so attached to some of the kids in our homes, and isn't that the idea anyway???? Oh well, soups and fun on the last Friday of March (the 26<sup>th</sup>) - 12-2PM, Kids Welcome. I am re extending an invitation to the social workers to join us for Soup Group in April. Since everyone is coming this month, it may be a rather quiet soup group. I can still break out the Tequila shots, make Tortilla Soup and we can all wear Western attire - stay tuned for details in next month's Soup Group article! 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  
479-0357  
andrapino@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-Whittlely  
(898-5677)

Linda Gregory (479-8702)

### Newsletter Crew

Carol Ihlenburg  
Linda Gregory  
Barbara Sabido

