



CHAPTER 9

# MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

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Issue 80

May 20, 2010



## MFPA May 2010 Newsletter

Another school year is coming to an end! The scramble for locating fun things to keep the children occupied and your sanity intact over the summer begins. Be sure to start your summer off by attending this year's MFPA annual picnic on June 18th. The 2010 Picnic Committee has been working hard the last few months obtaining donations and organizing this year's event. We have some fun surprises and additions including some fun "take home" items for the kids. We are still seeking volunteers for the dunk tank. If you are a social worker, foster parent, CASA or attorney and wouldn't mind getting a little wet to help amuse the kids, please contact me (Carol 507-1822). The first to respond get their choice of times! See the attached flyer for all of the details.

If you have foster children between the ages of 10 and 14, definitely plan on signing them up to attend the Fire Squirts camp (free to foster children!) being held July 19-23 in Novato. Call Marin Advocates for Children (507-9016) for more information.

This year's Meet and Greet will take place on May 25th from 4-5:30 pm at the Health and Wellness Campus. We will be presenting the 1st Annual Carol McKenna Award to a deserving foster parent and social worker. There will be good food and fun company. See attached flyer for more information.

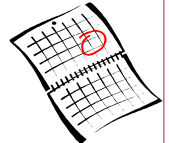
The MFPA board has scheduled our trainings for the rest of this year. Mark your calendars now!

- September 15th: IEPs and mental health,
- October 20th: Complaint Procedures, and
- November 17th: Grief and Loss and it's effects on children.

The MFPA would like to thank those who participated in The Marin Human Race on May 8th. The weather was perfect—not too cold and not too hot. Mimi Katz, Carol Ihlenburg, Linda Gregory and Kris Bradley all walked the course. Each had one or more children in tow. We'd also like to extend a big thank you to the following super amazing participants who helped raise money for the association: Carol Ihlenburg (\$840), Jonathan Toste (\$625), Andrea Pino (\$405), Linda Gregory (\$175), and Cesar Lagleva (\$40). Just over \$2,000 total was raised! If you were planning to make a donation and it slipped your mind, you can always make a donation directly to the association.

-Carol Ihlenburg, MFPA Newsletter Editor

### Upcoming Events



❖ **May 25:** Meet and Greet, San Rafael, 4-5:30PM

❖ **May 25:** Bruce Perry's DVD series, Understanding Traumatized and Maltreated Children, The Core Concepts, San Rafael, 9:30—12:30

❖ **May 28:** Soup Group, San Rafael, 12-2 PM

❖ **June 4:** MFPA Board Meeting, San Rafael, 10-12

❖ **June 5:** CPR and First Aid, Novato, 9-12/1-4

❖ **June 18:** MFPA 8th Annual Foster Family and Social Worker Picnic, San Rafael, 12:30—3PM

❖ **June 18:** Navigating The Individual Education Program (IEP), San Rafael, 11AM—12:30PM

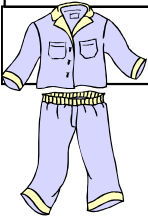
❖ **July 19-23:** Fire Squirts Camp

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

# Funding for Tutoring and Afterschool 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 afterschool 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 reapply. 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 afterschool 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 that 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 serve 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.

## Welcome New Foster Parent

Marin County Children and Family Services would like to welcome our newest foster parent, Barbara Ahern. A self-employed accountant who works part-time, Barbara lives in San Rafael in a charming, light and comfortable two-bedroom home. Having raised a son, Barbara is now an involved grandmother and she can't wait to welcome girls or boys between the ages of five and fourteen. Her interests include gardening, reading, cooking, sewing and hiking. She looks forward to taking children to visit her cabin in the mountains, and she will enjoy taking them on local outings as well (i.e. to museums or to ride the cable cars in the city, etc). Barbara has already attended MFPA meetings and soup groups so many of you have already had the pleasure of meeting her. She is a reliable, thoughtful, well-organized and fun individual and she will be a true asset to this agency and to the children who need her.—*Cindy Wasserman, MSW, Licensing Social Worker, Marin County Children and Family Services*

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: **Alva Ackley**, after many years of service to the children and families of Marin County, will be retiring at the end of : June. Since joining the CFS team as a Social Services Unit Supervisor in 2000, Ms. Ackley has made many valuable con- : tributions to CFS and to the families of Marin County. Her initial assignment upon joining CFS was coordination of the : Youth Pilot Project (YPP), which serves families in CFS, Mental Health, and Probation. She later took on supervision of : staff in the Continuing Services Unit in addition to YPP. Several years ago, she worked tirelessly for months with : many community partners to put together Sustaining Families, a very successful program that currently serves youth : and families from CFS, Mental Health, and Probation. Most recently, Ms. Ackley took on supervision of the clerical : staff and the Day Care Program in addition to her existing responsibilities with YPP and Sustaining Families. We want : to thank Ms. Ackley for her many years of service to Marin County and her commitment and dedication to improving : the lives of children and families. We have been fortunate to have her as a member of the leadership team at CFS for : the last decade. We wish her the very best as she embarks on new adventures in the next phase of her life.  
: .....

Recently, Michael Perry taught about Positive Behavioral Interventions focusing on the Conflict Cycle and helping foster parents learn how to verbally respond to their kids' behavior. For those who missed the last training, he can follow up on what was presented and use this to then talk about working with *Aggressive Kids and Bullying*. He also offers a training on *Separation and Transitioning Kids* into placement. We are thinking of having him Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. Can those of you who requested him and all of the rest of you commit to coming? PLEASE get back to me soon, since he would have to book his flight from LA soon! Thanks for your responses! Megan ([Mchesnut@cccyo.org](mailto:Mchesnut@cccyo.org)) from St. Vincent's on behalf of Patty Cala from the Foster Care Education Program and St. Vincent's Foster Family Agency.

# Presidential Proclamation-National Foster Care Month

Nearly a half-million children and youth are in foster care in America, all entering the system through no fault of their own. During National Foster Care Month, we recognize the promise of children and youth in foster care, as well as former foster youth. We also celebrate the professionals and foster parents who demonstrate the depth and kindness of the human heart.

Children and youth in foster care deserve the happiness and joy every child should experience through family life and a safe, loving home. Families provide children with unconditional love, stability, trust, and the support to grow into healthy, productive adults. Unfortunately, too many foster youth reach the age at which they must leave foster care and enter adulthood without the support of a permanent family.

Much work remains to reach the goal of permanence for every child, and my Administration has supported states that increased the number of children adopted out of foster care, providing over \$35 million in 2009 through the Adoption Incentives Program. We are also committed to

meeting the developmental, educational, and health-related needs of children and youth in foster care. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided a significant increase in funding for the Title IV-E adoption and foster care assistance program. States can use these funds to ensure those placed in foster care will enter a safe and stable environment.

In addition, we are implementing the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. This law promotes permanency and improved outcomes for foster youth through support for kinship care and adoption, support for older youth, direct access to federal resources for Indian tribes, coordinated health benefits, improved educational stability and opportunities, and adoption incentives and assistance. Former foster youth will also benefit from the Affordable Care Act, which, beginning in 2014, will ensure Medicaid coverage for them in every State.

This month, caring foster parents and professionals across our nation will celebrate the triumphs of children and youth in foster care as they work to remove barriers to reaching a per-

manent family. Federal, state, and local government agencies, communities, and individuals all have a role to play as well. Together, we can ensure that young people in foster care have the opportunities and encouragement they need to realize their full potential.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 2010 as National Foster Care Month. I call upon all Americans to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities to honor and support young people in foster care, and to recognize the committed adults who work on their behalf each day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fourth.

-Barack Obama

## MFPA Membership At All Time High!

Thank you to each and every foster parent and/or community member who joined the Marin Foster Parent Association! The MFPA is committed to serving you. Thank you for supporting us in turn. It is because of people like yourselves that make us a stronger community to really create the structure to support our children. Please feel free to reach out to us if we can support you in any way. Thank you for making this year's membership drive the best year yet! If your name isn't listed below, consider completing the membership application on the last page of this newsletter and joining us now!

Laura Abramson\*Christopher and Christine Andrews\*Barbara Atkinson\*Bruce and Sharon Skolnick-Bagnoli\*Annette Blanchard\*Peggy Byrne\*Barbara Camp\*Alan Cence\*Wendy Crowell\*Stephanie Evans\*Abel and Jennifer Garcia\*Jeffrey Grey\*Linda Gregory\*Owen and Faye Haddock\*Carol Ihlenburg\*Cheryl (Cherry) Jones\*Pam Juckas\*Mimi Katz\*Cesar Lagleva\*Royce McLemore\*Teri Lane Mahan\*Mark and Mary Melville-Warner\*Kristie Moore\*Susan Nasca\*Gil and Rachel Norman\*Fran Perrulli\*Andrea Pino\*Mike and Alissa Ralston\*Joan Roane\*Ruth Rosen\*Brian and Stephanie Sanford\*Daniel Kohn\*Deborah Stachel\*Hilary Staples\*John and Paula Starrett\*Scott Stitham\*TLC Child & Family Services\*Jonathan Toste\*Paul and Annette Venables\*Jim and Monica Walsh\*Toney and Kathryn Whittley\*Laura Zahradnik



# 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:** *Maria Affinito, MSW, Emergency Response Worker, CWVII*

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

I chose the field of social work because I was attracted to addressing social injustices at a micro level, including the individual and family systems. Gloria Steinem's quote of the family encapsulates the basic foundation of life that family serves, where she says that "the family is the basic cell of government: it is where we are trained to believe that we are human beings or that we are chattel, it is where we are trained to see the sex and race divisions and become callous to injustice even if it is done to ourselves, to accept as biological a full system of authoritarian government". With this in mind, intervening at the family level, specifically in the work we do, I felt that the issues of justice could be addressed and possibly rectified. Furthermore, the professional values of the National Association of Social Workers mirrored my own, such as Ser-

vice, Social Justice, Importance of Human Relationships, and Competence. These are values that have guided my life choices, on a personal and professional level. Ultimately, the decision to pursue Social Work, was done to honor my mother's memory, as she, like many of our clients suffered many plights, and if there was a social worker who could have connected with her along the way, things could have been different.

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

Selecting social work was a career change for me, as I was formerly working in a corporate management setting. Yet, while working in that setting, I volunteered tutoring high risk youth, and youth in Juvenile Hall with different nonprofit agencies. I slowly moved to working with a nonprofit agency full time, as a support counselor for several years, working within a wraparound model, ITFC, and as a TBS coach. I had the benefit of working with families for several years, and seeing children reunify with families, as well as assist emancipated youth make permanent connections in their community. So far, I have been involved in this field full time for 8 years.

## What is the most rewarding and most challenging part of your work as a

## social worker?

The most rewarding parts of my work are the relationships with clients, as well as the rapport building that occurs in a short time period, given the nature of the investigating social worker's role. Connections made with youth, children, and parents in such a short time that motivate change and ultimately mitigate safety and risk factors for children are gratifying.

The most challenging is true collaboration among agencies and individuals. It can be frustrating when there are numerous players, be them professional or not, and each player identifies the problem and solution differently, resulting in a lag time for aid to reach the family.

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

Without you, we could not do our jobs. Foster parents provide such an essential piece to keeping children safe, by providing nurturance and care, with ultimately aiding in children reunifying with their families. We are all appreciative for everything our foster parents do for our children and parents.

## Licensing Corner

On April 1<sup>st</sup> the talented licensing staff conducted our first OCED (On-Call Emergency Duty) training for all foster parents who have either been providing emergency foster care or are interested in providing it in the future. We had a wonderful guest speaker, Juan Funes, who discussed what to expect when an after-hours ER worker places a child in an OCED home. The licensing workers enjoyed facilitating the training and there was good discussion about many topics, including welcoming a child into your home and how to handle medical issues that come up after-hours. The goal of this training was to present detailed, consistent information for all OCED foster parents, as well as recruit some new faces for the OCED list! We are also starting to plan for OCED coverage for this summer, so any foster parents who are interested in providing On-Call Emergency Foster Care during the summer months are encouraged to contact their licensing worker. We know a lot of people go on vacation during the next few months so it is helpful for us to plan coverage in advance. We are also planning to have another OCED training in the fall for foster parents who were unable to make it this time. And yes, next time we will not forget the dessert, Mimi!



# 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)*

**Interviewer: Jonathan Toste**

**Interviewee: Roslyn Weatherall**

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

My early history is wrapped around an alcoholic and drug-abusing mom raising me until I was 13. Her boyfriend physically abused her and sexually abused me. I was never told who my biological father was. I did have a positive relationship with my maternal grandparents, and they were also responsible for a portion of my early upbringing. Skeletons in their closets caused me to stay slightly distanced from them. They were, however, a constant known source of relative safety for me.

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

I went into foster care at the age of 13; the process started after I told a counselor at my middle school about the abuse occurring in my home. I was immediately hauled away from school in the back seat of a police car - a stigma that followed me for the rest of my days in the affluent Bay Area community that I grew up in. My stepdad went to jail for three months. Until the age of 22, I remained in foster care - at which time I moved in with my boyfriend/now husband. My foster parents treated me like their own child, paying for my wedding as well as my foster dad

giving me away at my wedding. My husband and I now have a four year-old daughter.

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

My best friend's mom, Judith, changed her whole life around and became a licensed foster home for me. When she re-married, she arranged for a new placement in the same neighborhood. Sandy, her daughter, and my best friend, wrote me everyday when I was in the group home. I'll forever be indebted to their support at the most difficult transition in my life. Besides the security, love and stability from my four foster parents, two of my middle school teachers appeared out of the void of schoolyard pain and brought hope to me during my survival of the madness I was experiencing. Mr. Scully, a crotchety old dude and my strictest teacher, appeared at my shelter each morning, picked me up and took me to school everyday without ever letting any of the schoolyard loudmouths ever know it was happening. He didn't judge me and showed me kindness, understanding and a truthfulness I had never before experienced in my life. Another person, my French teacher, also helped me through my suffering at that time. She treated me with grace and like a peer. I'm now in my 30's and, to this day, we are still in touch. I credit her with helping me become the strong, educated woman I am today.

**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 never really had much time to think about such ideas; my life had been all

about survival until I was about 22. This is when I realized that I had never had a chance to grieve all the turmoil I waded through in my life. Just yesterday, an amazing missing piece of my life was confirmed - DNA testing proved who my biological Dad is - and he has become the one thread of truth and sunshine out of the lies and failures perpetuated by my bio-mom. He seems to be one of the actual good choices she made many years ago.

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

I guess I was blessed with good cognitive reasoning. A major part of my healing was to realize how much my biological, alcoholic mom taught me. I really understood her bad choices regarding boyfriends, alcohol and drugs. Her choices caused me great suffering. During my second placement in an abused children's shelter, I made a very conscious choice not to let my bio-mom be the excuse for my bad actions. I saw the other girls in the group home blaming their parents for their own stupid behavior. I clearly saw it would lead me to being just who she was, and I had a deep hatred for how she acted. I never wanted to become like her.

*The above story is true; some names have been changed to protect identities. We are looking for other, over 30 year-old, fostered or adopted adults to participate in telephone interviews. Please write: [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.



## Soup Group and Fun

Soup group in April was so well attended that I won't even list names this time. Over 25 folks came for soup, support and surprises. We packed them in laughing, talking and being together! We ran out of places to sit at the table. We ran out of clean bowls and big spoons. And, we had to share dessert plates, but no one really cared. A wonderful mix of social workers arrived not knowing what was going to transpire. I cannot reveal all, but they were enlightened about fun at Mimi's when food is involved. I made a huge vat of Mexican Chicken Soup, which became Tortilla Soup when we added the home made chips and all the add-ins according to your own individual taste. I did ask a Mariachi Band to join us, and they were spectacular, tho a little loud. A few babies cried, but the dancing was great and we didn't care about baby noise cuz we could hardly hear it for the din of lunch. I think it was wonderful to get to hang around in an informal way and be together as foster folks

and social workers. We were all just hungry people and noisy kids. There was no agenda except to eat and chat, other than Laura Abramson who brought some articles from a newspaper in Hawaii about Vitamin D deficiencies in children and sickle cell disease she read to the group as they slurped their soup. So often we foster parents feel we are in a different reality than the social workers. We sometimes feel unappreciated, tho this is changing, and we feel like we aren't understood. Working 24/7 with difficult situations daily with our foster kids is an accomplishment. Always challenging, often too busy, sometimes unrested, it was nice to sit around, joke a lot, giggle and feel like we were all friends, not child welfare providers. It was definitely not a 'work lunch'!!! I look forward to hosting again, and hopefully the word will spread that Soup Group is FUN and more SWs will attend. We would love to see you all!!!! I'll let you know via newsletter when we will do this 'open to SWs agenda' again. All you foster families, next soup group will be May 28th, right before Memorial Day Weekend. See ya then, noon till two; no potluck, kids welcome and don't help with clean-up! Mimi 492-0207 -Mimi Katz, Soup Group Chair

Form JV 290 (aka Caregiver Information Form) made easy! You can obtain all juvenile court forms at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/forms.cgi> including the JV-290. This form is a way to inform the courts of how a foster child in your care is doing. Once at the website, select "juvenile" for form type. Forms are listed in numerical order with a "F" in the second column, in this case, JV-290 F for those that can be filled in by typing on your computer and printing. Thank you to County Counsel Micki Keno for this useful, quick link.

## 2010 MFPA Executive Board Members

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## Newsletter Crew

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Barbara Sabido  
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