



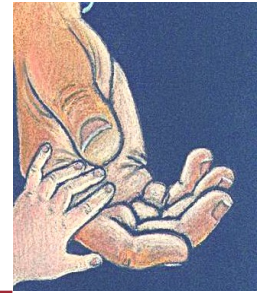
CHAPTER 9

# MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

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## MFPA October 2010 Newsletter

Recent tragedies in Marin due to teen suicide and fatal teen drinking and driving have left many parents and young people asking and wondering how these events could have happened. While there are no absolute or rational explanations to the unnecessary losses of young lives, we can focus our attention on how to try to prevent them in the future.

One of the basic preventive steps that we can all take is by communicating. As adults, we should encourage and engage our children and other young people in our lives to respectfully share and to listen to their ideas, thoughts and feelings. Gaining insight into their world of thoughts and feelings provides helpful ways that we can respond to their needs, particularly during a time of crisis. It is important that we recognize emotional and behavioral symptoms if we are going to be able to effectively help them cope with immediate stressors. Many children typically go through similar stages of grief and loss. They are as follows:

Stage 1. **Shock and denial**- reacts little and may refuse to believe what has happened. Gives the appearance of accepting what has happened.

Stage 2. **Protest and anger**- these feelings, over time, take over. The child feels anger, rebellion and anxiety.

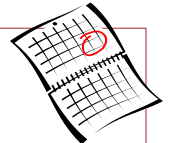
Stage 3. **Despair**- the feeling of not being able to change the situation. The child may be depressed, withdrawn and accepts blame for what has happened.

Stage 4. **Acceptance**- begins to accept the fact that the loved one is not returning and begins to behave normally again. Plays, eats and interacts again but may be different than before.

It is also recommended that parents and young people seek additional help or support when dealing with an overwhelming painful loss. The key is not to work or deal with it yourself but to expand on the network or resources of support available in your everyday life. -*Cesar Lagleva-LCSW, MFPA Board President*

For additional information and assistance in identifying and understanding grief and loss in the lives of children, don't miss November's Meet and Eat. Meghan Harris, PsyD will present on this topic. See attached flyer for details.

### Upcoming Events



❖ **October 22:** The Impact of Childhood Trauma on Child Development: Resiliency in the Face of Adversity, San Francisco, 8:30 AM—3:30 PM

❖ **October 29:** Soup Group, San Rafael, 12-2 PM

❖ **November 3:** Grief and Loss with Traci Tippett, LCSW, San Rafael, 9 -3

❖ **November 4:** MFPA Board Meeting, San Rafael, 10 AM-12 PM

❖ **November 8:** Huckleberry Youth Program Presentation, San Rafael, 10-11AM

❖ **November 17:** MFPA Meet and Eat, Understanding and Dealing With Children's Grief and Loss, San Rafael, 6:00-8:30 PM

❖ **December 2:** Annual Holiday Party at Strawberry Rec Center, 6-8 PM

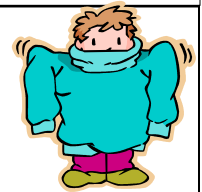
❖ **December 8:** Sally Clapper of the Independent Living Program and Transitional Housing Program Presentation, San Rafael, 11-12:30

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

## Discounts at Local Clothing Stores for Foster Parents

Hey Mom, I Have Nothing to Wear!!

Are you hearing this lament coming from your daughter's bedroom? Are you thinking Junior's pants leave him no room for lunch, but he *is* ready for a flood!? Does your new foster child need additional clothing (because often they arrive with just what they are wearing)? Have no fear, the following terrific Marin re-sale/consignment shops offer discounts to foster parents:



- Butterfly Tots to Tweens, Fairfax (20% Discount)
- Hippo Kisses, Novato (10% Discount)
- Marin Kids & Maternity Consignment, San Rafael (10% Discount)
- Outgrown, San Rafael (10% Discount)

It's easy to get a whole wardrobe inexpensively. Just bring in your CSFPA membership card (you receive one when you join the Marin Foster Parent Association) and present it at time of purchase at any of the shops listed above. In addition to discounts, Butterfly Tots to Tweens, Hippo Kisses, and Marin Kids & Maternity Consignment have donation clothes for free if you call and ask. There's nothing better than gently loved clothing, 'broken in' and ready to wear. Happy shopping!

## 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. Funding will be distributed to foster families through an application process on a first come/first serve basis with a combined monthly maximum amount of \$400.00 to be distributed amongst all approved applicants. Requests must be for a foster child or child in the dependency system, and the funding will benefit him/her educationally. Once approval is obtained, 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!

## ReCap of September's Meet and Eat IEP Presentation

An IEP (Individual Education Plan) is developed for children age 3 to 22 years who have a diagnosed or suspected disability or developmental delay to provide them special education services as mandated by law. In certain cases, IEP's are initiated for children younger than three. An IEP process begins with the person who holds the educational rights for the child (i.e. parent, foster parent, CASA) consenting to an evaluation of the child's intellect, or intelligence, to assess if it is significantly higher than their school performance. If more than 18 points different, the IEP provides an integrated plan for the services necessary to help the child perform better in school and close the gap between performance and intelligence. Likewise, Community Mental Health services are available for children whose school performance is being impacted by a mental health issue. An IEP is reviewed every year and updated every three years. If a child who has an IEP from another county is placed in this county, their IEP will continue as soon as possible using Marin's available services.

Of those who attended September's presentation, all agreed the process can be daunting! One parent shared that she felt overwhelmed at the plan presentation and she felt pressured to sign it right then. Deb Hemphill assured us you don't have to sign the IEP immediately and suggested that taking time to review prior to signing can be helpful for many parents. Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center is a fantastic resource for parents. Their mission is to "empower families of children with special needs to successfully understand and access the systems that serve them". Their experienced advocates can guide you one-on-one through the IEP process and even attend meetings with you. Another important resource is Penny Valentine ([pvalentine@marink12.ca.us](mailto:pvalentine@marink12.ca.us)), Marin's 'special education local plan or "SELPA" director. The SELPA webpage at [marinschools.org](http://marinschools.org) offers all kinds of information on IEP's. -Linda Gregory, MFPA Board Mem-

# Social Worker Profile



Social Worker Profiles is featured to 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:** Milagros (Mila) J Maldonado, MSW

**Position:** Ongoing Service Unit Social Worker

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

I chose the field of social work because I have always been interested in the opportunity to help others. I strongly believe that people can change given the right circumstances, opportunities and support.

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

I was born and raised in Lima, Peru. I moved to the U.S.A when I was 17 years old. I moved to this country leaving the most important people in my life - my mother and older brother. I also had no knowledge of the English language. Given my age and the fact I did not know the language, my move here was very challenging.

I believe the experiences I encountered being a first-generation immigrant in this country set the stage for me to become a social worker. I have a political understanding, compassion and an ability to identify with people from all sorts of backgrounds regardless of their economic, cultural, educational or political affiliation.

I completed high school in Peru. Most of my upper level education took place in San Francisco. I obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Studies, with a concentration in Literature, Language and Communication at SFSU. Two years later, I earned a Master's Degree in Social Work with an emphasis on Child Welfare (SFSU- May 2004). I was offered a social worker position with Santa Cruz County, where I worked and lived for three years. I started in the Ongoing Unit and was transferred to the Adoptions Unit.

I completed two internships, one in San Mateo County and another at Instituto Familiar de la Raza in San Francisco.

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

Being an ongoing social worker can be very challenging at times, because it is difficult to predict the outcome of a case. Every case is different and some

cases require more time than others. Dealing with the unexpected is also part of every case and it can be very complicated. In addition, time management, dealing with bureaucracy and deadlines create continuous challenges.

The most rewarding experience of my work as a social worker is when I see children overcome obstacles and challenges that were once an unhealthy part of their family dynamic. It is also a very rewarding experience to see adults make significant changes that will help them become better parents.

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

In the short time I have been in this position with Marin County, I have had the opportunity to get to know some of the most amazing foster parents. I would like you to know that I admire and appreciate the constant work you do in our community and, although it might not feel like it at times, your incredible support and contribution to the lives of many children of Marin does make a difference.

## Update on Donations Obtained by MFPA

Thank you to those who responded to Kathryn Whittle's email inquiring what foster parents would appreciate most from our volunteer efforts to obtain donations for foster families. The response was a resounding "We want tickets to events—and, for our whole family!" This is great information for us with which to move forward. With this in mind, we will not aggressively seek out holiday donations of toys for foster families; however, donations will be processed and distributed through Children and Family Services. One organization we will be receiving holiday donations from is Mill Valley Middle School. The kids spend a day putting together baskets for those in need and the MFPA receives a portion of these. We feel it is not only nice for our foster children to receive but also encourages the middle school children to give back to their community. Additionally, we will receive toy donations through Sleep Train's toy drive. These will either be distributed individually to foster families or become part of our "Donation Closet" for foster families to request donations for special occasions. Send in any ideas and "contacts" you may know of for obtaining event tickets!

# 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.*

**Interviewer: Jonathan Toste**

**Interviewee: Michele de Luca**

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

My life was a roller coaster of tragedy - starting at age five and a half with being yanked out of the fun life of our family's restaurant, to age 24, when I mustered the strength to put the man who raped me, two years earlier, behind bars for 10 years. My mom and bipolar dad raised me until I was almost six - along with my older sister and brother. I knew love and security from my mom, my eight-year-old sister and nine-year-old brother. I trusted Dad as well. My siblings and I were a tight troop and roamed the Greenwich Village neighborhood around our restaurant with gusto and delight. Then came a horrible several weeks- we were evicted from our apartment and lived in various crazy situations. The first was a nudist household infested with hundreds of cockroaches and, in another apartment, I had to pee in a can in front of adults. Then we spent two weeks at a Catholic summer camp followed by a hotel - with Dad only. Unknown to me, Mom was under psychiatric care for attempted suicide.

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

I was not quite six when the several weeks of shuffling stopped during a visit to a courthouse toy room, and two women came and took me away - my sister was there and said it would be OK to go with these two ladies. I didn't see either of my siblings again for nearly 10 months. I was taken to a strange neighborhood and lived in an Irish household (we were Italian) with two older teens and a three-year-old adopted girl.

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

The Irish family tolerated me; I didn't feel loved or protected. Although they bought me the first new clothes I ever remembered owning and fed me well, I still totally withheld my emotions - never crying in front of them. One strange but comforting thing the mom did for me was to send me to bed with a handful of raisins - I would go to bed and break open each tiny raisin and eat the inside first until it was only skin and then eat that part last - somehow this was extremely comforting, and the only "loving" thing I remember from that family. Dad brought me "A Child's Garden of Verses" during a foster care visit - I taught myself to read from that book and still have it - it means the world to me.

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

My dad died of a heart attack a year after we were reunited as a family - so

at seven I coped with this by thinking that he had been a spy and that his death was faked and that once it was safe for him to come out of hiding, he would show up and surprise us one day. I'm not sure how long I held on to this denial.

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

We were Catholic - not very conforming, but somehow in my fragmented experience with the church - and at 4 years old - I had decided that if something was the right thing to do, I would always do it. Now in my fifties, I have spent 20 years being "Buki the Clown", nationally sought after and with a large Bay Area following, I am doing the right thing. I am committed to bringing kids back to that perfect, innocent world of being a child - while still trying to fill in all the holes in my shredded upbringing. Children are heroes - they reach into their souls coping with horrendous situations without a full skill-set and somehow find their way out alone ...

*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. If you or someone you know would be willing to share his/her experience, please contact Jonathan Toste at [jjtoste@gmail.com](mailto:jjtoste@gmail.com).*

We are in need of someone to host this year's annual holiday get together. In the past, we have hosted an evening of Caroling. However, it can be any type of event where foster families can come together to celebrate the holiday season. It could even be an "open house" where folks stop in for a cup of cocoa and a cookie. The MFPA will help organize and purchase any necessities. If you are interested, please contact Carol Ihlenburg at 507-1822.

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 Extravaganza!

Ahhhhh: The many benefits of attending the soup group lunches at Mimi's!!!! Last month, I entered our name (the Marin Foster Parent Association Monthly Soup Group Luncheon Party) in the raffle in Marin County to win that big mansion that is being offered as a fundraiser. You've probably seen it advertised on the sides of buses and billboards in SF and in magazines.... We all got together at soup group and bought a bunch of tickets for that raffle....and we are anxiously awaiting the reply on whether we win the big house or not. I heard through the grapevine that we are seriously being considered for the raffle prize as we are a wonderful organization and do so much for kids and families in Marin. We are all slurping soup contentedly and hoping for the best. If you want to get in on the big event and go to live in that big mystery house on a lovely hill somewhere in Marin, join us for soup and conversation next month as we await the drawing and discover

who is the Big Winner. I do think it will be us. I really do. Soup Group is so much fun, well attended (tho there is always room for a few more of you) and we all could really use a huge mansion on a hill. Maybe it will come with a housekeeper, and a yard maintenance staff and babysitters built-in, and even a chauffeur. I know if I win that big house there is no way I will have time to keep up with the housework. I have a lot of trouble with my own yard work, and I cannot imagine driving all the kids to all the things I drive them to if I have a big house to take care of. I wonder if I can keep my chickens if I go to live in that big house. And will DSS really license it if I have lots of staff running things for me. I guess they will all just have to pass a background check. I think that's fair. Anyway, join us on the last Friday in October and let's slurp together and await our move-in date. I really think we have a good chance. See ya Friday the 29th (12-2). Remember, no clean-up, kids welcome, and the possibility of a big house on the horizon can be everybody's dream.... All foster parents are encouraged to join us for free soup slurping and conversation. New faces welcome—we promise to use our best manners! -Mimi Katz

Ring..Ring...Hi! This is Jonathan, from the Marin Foster Parent Association Board, I'm calling to see if you received your free newsletter and... Every month, four of us call foster parents with a quick reminder and an outreach of kindness. Two of our volunteers have been doing this for three years and really need a break - just 12 calls, once a month- could you help us out in this pinch?? It's fun to check in with other foster parents. Please call or email me right now. Making 12 calls is easy, but making 24 is a lot harder - which I have to do when someone goes on vacation or is sick. Please help us with this outreach, Just 12 calls. Call me now 415-258-9459!

## 2010 MFPA Executive Board Members

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