



Foster Parent Profile



Foster Parent Profiles is overseen by MFPA Co-Vice President Jonathan Toste.

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

Foster Parent: *Christine Swain*
Interviewer: *Jonathan Toste*

Why did you choose to be a foster parent?

It was the easiest way to become a parent - especially when you have missed your child-bearing years as a bank Vice-President. Actually, there is a little bit more method to my madness than that, which is more philosophical in context - I firmly believe that to survive as a human race we seriously need to reduce the birthrate. There are already too many children in this world - what we need are more adults parenting youth - not giving birth to them!

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

I'm a Native Californian. I grew up in Hollywood, the film capitol of the United States, and went to a private Catholic high school in the sunny Los Angeles area.

I dabbled in college for awhile and eventually landed a great job for Security Pacific Bank. I did well, enjoyed my work and stayed at the job for ten years. While there, I made some real estate investments in tough neighbor-

hoods of L.A. and one day on a visit to Northern Calif. I "discovered" Bolinas and that was it. I always had the dream of living rurally and Bolinas Town was immediately recognizable as that idyllic community. It is a hard place for kids to "escape" from and, since everybody knows everybody, it is a lot harder for kids to get away with misbehaving. None-the-less, last year one of my short to stay teens rifled \$500 dollars from my purse, stole and totaled my car and landed himself in juvenile hall - not the way I like my stays to end.

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

Owning property and having lived "in the hood" (bad sections of L.A.) for a number of years and being tall and heavy-set has given me lots of street smarts - I don't take guff from no one! I'm a good listener. I tell the kids to tell me their problems and encourage and work with them to solve them. I always make sure that my foster kids understand how it was that they were responsible for the wrong they did. I believe, that in order to get their behavior to change, the kids must understand their connection to the "cause" in order to change the effect (the punishment/consequence).

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

The nature of foster care is in a whirlwind of bad change as I am seeing it. So, it is super-essential to provide the best care you can - the kid you have now may never get better care again. I'm seeing kids go back with terrible families - kids that, just

a few years ago would never have gone back to such incapable biological homes. But on the other side a lot of kids that would never have been put into adoption at their ages, 10+ years old, are now finding permanent adoptive homes.

What 5 attributes best describe you?

I have a sense of humor, I don't take abuse (from the kids) as personal, I'm always looking at the big picture - I don't sweat the little stuff, I'm an artist (in clay) and I'm sturdy!

Christine graciously offers to share her skills with other foster parents and encourages others to do the same. She can be reached at: 415-868-0892

Cool Stuff For Foster Kids

Marin Advocates for Children has given the Marin Foster Parent Association several bags of stuffed animals and some toys hoping Marin County's foster children would be able to enjoy them. If you have children in placement and are interested, please contact Carol Ihlenburg at 507-1822. Additionally, MAC has some lovely wood toddler chairs and books. If interested in these items, please contact Carol Powell at 507-9016.

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 Disappointment

Another soup group at my house (Mimi's) was delicious and well attended, but I feel like maybe I mislead you, unintentionally. I had offered a door prize/special incentive/grown-ups-only reward for attending the first soup group of the back-to-school fall schedule. And I did my best, but it did not pan out. As a surprise to all the Moms (and Dads...kinda) who have been so regularly showing up, I tried to book the Chippendales for lunch. I really thought they would be here. I got good response when I talked to their booking agent. He liked the idea of a group of foster moms really getting to enjoy their act, and they soooo believe in, and support, what we do. But unfortunately the Chippen-

dales had already been booked by two of the local Mother's Groups in the county for a performance at their luncheons, and couldn't do all three events. So I apologize for the enticements, and I will try to make it up to you. Anyway, the soups were delicious. We ate a lovely Potato with Broccoli spiced with cumin and cilantro. It was creamy and spicy but not too hot. Tummy coating! The second soup came from the wonderful new cook book that I got from the Foster Parent Association appreciating my efforts. The soup is called Mrs. Birdsong's Beef and Cabbage Soup (with vegetables and lima beans). It was thick and filling. I ate lots of that soup! (My kids are loving the leftovers, so I have been making big pots!) Soup group is different without Donna and Mark Plank, who were committed regulars. Maybe Donna will come visit soon and show up at soup group. I certainly miss her and wish the Planks were still around. We were well attended: Carol Ihlenburg, John and Laura Abramson, Monica Walsh, Christine Andrews, Alice Basch, Andrea Pino, Peggy Byrne, Scott Stitham, Wendy Crowel, and Myself, the infamous soup producer and perveyor of surprise performances! The weather is cooling down, mercifully, and I am thinking of sneaking in a chili-group in the colder months of the coming winter. I welcome your feedback. I would love to see some new faces, but really look forward each month to the wonderful folks who are making soup group such a success. Please keep coming, and soon, bring a friend! (A foster parent friend). I am enjoying the back to school shift in energy around my house. Six kids in five schools plus a baby. I am busy, but my days are quieter. I have back to school nite every day of the month (it seems). I don't especially look forward to the holidays lining up, but I have a fabulous group of kids here and am having lots of fun with them. See you all Friday the 26th of September, my house, noon till two. -Mimi Katz

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: The Marin Foster Parent Association is still looking for new board members for 2009!!! If you have any time to offer, :
: please contact any of the board members listed on this page or join us for our board meeting on October 2nd! :
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2007 MFPA Executive

Board Members:

Carol McKenna, President
479-8140
Carol1275@comcast.net

Vidette Poe, 1st Vice President
465-4622
vpoe99@yahoo.com

Jonathan Toste, 2nd Vice President/Phone Tree Chair
258-9459
jjetoste@gmail.com

Andrea Pino, Co-Secretary
479-0357
andrapino@comcast.net

Christine Andrews, Co-Secretary
785-3316
drmrsc@aol.com

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

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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!