



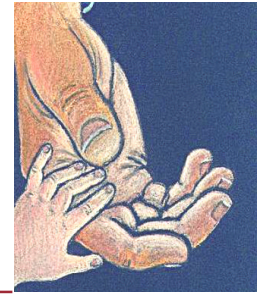
CHAPTER 9

# MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

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

(415) 507-0557

www.mfpa.net



Issue 83

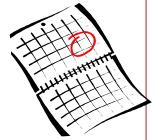
September 20, 2010



## MFPA September 2010 Newsletter

This month's Meet and Eat provided information about IEP's (Individual Educational Plans) - what is involved in obtaining an IEP, how to participate effectively in one and the various services your child can receive from one. There was also information provided about mental health services and how to obtain them for your foster child. There is a website to find out all you want to know about IEP's and more at [www.marinschools.org](http://www.marinschools.org)—simply click on the SELPA link. Thank you to Debbie Hemphill and Ann Pring for sharing your evening and information. Next month, Bree Marchman from Children and Family Services will go over the Foster Parent Complaint Investigation Handbook that was mailed out to foster parents a few months ago. See attached flyer for details.

### Upcoming Events



- ❖ **September 24:** Soup Group, San Rafael, 12-2 PM
- ❖ **September 24:** Permanency: A Legal & Psychological Mandate For Foster Children, Oakland, 9 AM-4 PM
- ❖ **September 25:** 4th Annual Marin City Health and Wellness Center "Unity In The Community" Community Wide Health Fair, Marin City, 10 AM-2 PM
- ❖ **September 29:** Revised Foster Care Regulations Training, San Rafael, 8-11:30 AM; 1-4:30 PM
- ❖ **October 7:** MFPA Board Meeting, San Rafael, 10 AM-12 PM
- ❖ **October 13-16:** CSFPA 34th Annual Training Conference, Oakland ([CSFPAonline.org](http://CSFPAonline.org))
- ❖ **October 20:** MFPA Meet and Eat, Training on the Complaint Process, San Rafael, 6:00-8:30 PM
- ❖ **October 20:** Liz Dunn, JD—Dependency Mediation Services, San Rafael, 11 AM-12:30 PM
- ❖ **October 22:** The Impact of Childhood Trauma on Child Development: Resiliency in the Face of Adversity, San Francisco, 8:30 AM—3:30 PM
- ❖ **December 2:** Annual Holiday Party at Strawberry Rec Center

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

When I retired from being the CPS attorney 10 years ago, I started a fund to provide money for classes and/or lessons in the arts fields for children in foster homes. I was well aware that the foster home stipend was not adequate to pay tuition for music, art, dance or acting classes, yet I felt strongly that participation in the arts added greatly to children's lives. In addition, mastering a musical instrument, performing in a dance concert, or creating an artwork could give a youngster a new sense of him or herself and carry over into studies and family relationships. I think it is important for kids to see LIVE performances and get a sense of what is really possible, maybe provide a dream to strive for! So, if you have a child with a desire to paint, dance, play the piano, act or sing, call (479-4911) or email me ([ruthrosen@LVHA.net](mailto:ruthrosen@LVHA.net)) with the details. Hopefully, the provider of the instruction is attached to a non-profit arts or community group, like Marin Ballet or the San Rafael Community Center. If not, the money can be routed through a Children and Family Services social worker. It's helpful to me if you've explored a little on your own - is what you want offered at a community center, Falkirk, the art center on 4th street in San Rafael? If not, any recommendations as to a teacher? Can you provide transportation? Also, the Friends of Marin Center offer a certain number of free tickets for events scheduled at Marin Center. I can help you get tickets for many of these or even assist in buying some; I just need a little advance notice. Many foster kids have benefitted from this opportunity. This is a reminder that the Arts Fund and all its possibilities are still available. -Ruth Rosen

## Welcome Newly Licensed Foster Parents

Marin County Children and Family Services would like to extend a warm welcome to **Lisa and Steve Pena**, our newly licensed foster family. Lisa is a registered nurse, specializing in neonatal and postpartum care at Marin General Hospital, and Steve works for Pacific Gas and Electric as a field person in their gas department. They are the parents of three children, and they share their beautiful Marinwood home with their two sons. The family is a happy, outgoing and highly cooperative bunch. Their household is busy, and they love to have fun with their extended family members and with friends, but all this activity is balanced by their centered, nurturing and calm nature. Licensed for two, Lisa and Steve look forward to caring for infants and babies, and are prepared to meet the special needs of young children facing certain medical challenges. Their parenting experience and Lisa's professional expertise mean they are an invaluable asset to our foster parent community. Please keep in mind that the Penas are also interested in providing respite care to infants and to school age girls and boys. Welcome Lisa, Steve, Ian and Joey! -*Cindy Wasserman, MSW*

## Licensing Corner

Foster parents, do you ever wonder:

- When can a child in foster care have access to their own medication?
- How can my foster child do chores around the house if they can't have access to cleaning supplies?
- Exactly who can I leave my foster child/ren with when I leave town for two or more days?

For answers to these and many other questions, please attend a special training given by Saxon Turner, State Licensing Representative: **REVISED FOSTER CARE REGULATIONS TRAINING**

Offered on Wednesday, September 29, 2010. Come to one of these sessions: 8am – 11:30 am (Room 109) or 1:00 – 4:30 pm (Room 110); At the Connection Center, 3240 Kerner Blvd, San Rafael  
Marin County CFS will provide reimbursement for child care. This training partially satisfies foster parents' ongoing training requirements. Please contact Julie Lenhardt at [jlenhardt@co.marin.ca.us](mailto:jlenhardt@co.marin.ca.us) or 473-2606 to RSVP

I have been teaching and mentoring children in the Bay Area for 17 years. A majority of those years have been teaching high school math to inner city students. Step Ahead Tutoring was created from the desire to help students achieve success rapidly, whether it's to keep up, catch up or get ahead. Step Ahead Tutoring offers 1-on-1 in-home tutoring in all academic subjects from K-12.



I am aware, through my direct exposure to over 2000 students, that tutoring is usually not affordable to those that need it most. From this awareness and from my appreciation for your fostering work, I would be more than happy to find solutions, whether it be price reductions or group sessions, to help meet the academic needs of children you have opened your hearts and homes to.

Karen Swett, Founder of Step Ahead Tutoring

[www.stepaheadtutoring.net](http://www.stepaheadtutoring.net)

415-888-8025

## 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!

# 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:** Sarah Colton, MSW  
**Position:** Adoptions (Permanency) Social Worker

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

While I was an undergrad at SF State, I had pretty much figured out that I wanted to be in the helping profession and was trying to decide what that would look like. I took a social work class in Child Welfare, and really enjoyed it. As a result of that class and some of my other experiences, I felt a strong pull to go into Child Welfare, and so set about figuring out how to get my foot in the door. I had a lovely conversation with the professor of that class, and she suggested I go work in a group home for emotionally disturbed children.

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

After I received my undergrad degree in Sociology from SF State, I worked at Edgewood Center in San Francisco for 3 ½ years. Edgewood is a level 14 group home that works with SED children. It was very hard work, lots of fun and energetic, while also emotionally taxing at times. I was so lucky to be working with

people who were putting their hearts into working with these challenging and beautiful children, hoping that the time they spend with them will make something of a positive impact. I worked both in the residential and school-based program, before becoming a regular staff at one of the cottages on campus. I left my job at Edgewood to attend graduate school, earning my MSW at UC Berkeley, with an emphasis in Child Welfare. During school I interned at Families First in the Kinship Support Services Unit, and in my second year I interned at Alameda County Children and Family Services in the Independent Living Skills Unit. After I graduated I worked for 6 months with Aspira Foster Family Agency, before coming to Marin County to fulfill my IV-E two year contract. I spent approximately 1 ½ years with the Continuing Services Unit before joining the Adoptions Unit, which I love.

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

There are many challenging parts of being an adoptions worker, which incidentally can also be the most rewarding! Finding a permanent home for a child is a task we do not take lightly, as we work towards finding matches that are going to last a lifetime and be in the best interest of that child. As a part of legally freeing a child for adoption I prepare for 366.26 Court hearings, during which parental rights are terminated, and the child is legally freed for adoption. I also do a lot of work up front to educate

families and kids about their permanent placement options, as a part of recognizing that adoption is not always the most viable permanent plan, and the child may be more suited towards a legal guardianship or a long term foster care placement. After the adoption finalizations occur and the dust has settled, I love hearing from the families that they are well and happy, and seeing pictures of the kids as they grow and thrive. I love the rewards of putting a new family together, making great matches, and seeing a family doing well together.

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

I am in such admiration of our foster parents. I think of them as true "front liners"; the ones that are with our kids 24/7, get them up in the morning, tuck them in at night and work with them through their daily struggles and triumphs. Foster parents are the eyes and ears of our cases, and their input is often invaluable for making evaluations about how our kids are doing. I truly hope that communication between foster parents and social workers grows ever stronger, as much is to be gained by consistent and open contact among all the adults. Thank you foster parents for the hard work and effort you put forward every

Last year, thanks to volunteer efforts by members of the MFPA board, we received lots of great holiday donations for foster children. It was challenging to distribute the items to foster families. The board has noticed foster parents seem to respond positively to event ticket donations more so than to item donations. Before we put forth an effort to seek out holiday donations this year, we'd like to hear from you. Do you need holiday donations for your foster children? A suggestion was made to have our "Donation Closet" open for special occasions; i.e. foster parents can choose items for their foster children's birthdays or for special "pick me up" days. If we don't receive responses, we will assume the general foster parent community is not interested in donations and spend our efforts elsewhere. You can respond via email ([cihlenburg@comcast.net](mailto:cihlenburg@comcast.net)) or phone (507-0557). Thank you for your time and assistance!

# 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: Alexis Alexander**

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

Living with my biological family until I was 15 was torture. I would never wish it on anyone. At 32, I now understand the effects my parents' upbringing had on my younger sister and me. My sister was two years younger than me. Mrs. Perrier, my homeroom teacher, was the one who reported my bruises to the Provincial Department of Health Services. I spent that first month in a shelter in an area of the province where I had never been before; there were no trees. It was extremely cold and the middle of winter. My sister went to live with my mother's brother - I didn't see her for nearly three years. My dad had been orphaned at 13 and adopted. My mom's parents died before she was 20 - so I never had any grandparents. I always protected my sister from my mom's psychotic episodes and my dad's drug and alcoholic rages. I was the one who took the brunt of the beatings we both received.

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

I was in foster care for three years - from age 15 until 18. I transitioned four times, three times in the first

year. First was a temporary shelter, second to a home that experienced a medical emergency, and then to a new placement where I shared a room with an awesome foster sister. Awesome so I thought, until we were caught smoking pot. Since she had quit school and was causing other problems for our foster mom, I was sent to a group home to spend my last two years in foster care. I was angry at that for a long time - since I was not the one causing the big problems - later I understood - that the other girl really needed that individual care.

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

Not hitting me was the most comforting thing. I was always testing situations - provoking limits with bad behavior - to see if I would be physically abused. Once I was assured that a foster parent or group home counselor could not be provoked into hitting me - I settled into fairly predictable good behavior and concentrated on getting good grades in school.

**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 wish I could have gone to only one home and stayed there. Adjusting three times in the first year was horrible and hung over me the next two years like a bad dream. Even though I chose to use bad behavior to "test" my

living situations and various caregivers, it was still a defense that wore on me badly. But probably worse was being dumped into society at 18 to fight my way through college by myself. I had no family to go home to at Christmas and holidays, no one to help me buy a car or send me to Europe for summer vacation.

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

Protecting and effectively raising my little sister from a very young age made me very responsible. I had to buy groceries, make dinner for the family, help my sister with homework, take her to school and make excuses to her teachers when they asked questions. All that prepared me more than I could have known to make it through high school and college on my own. It took about five years, after I turned 18, to reconcile with my birth parents. Seventeen years later, I am single and still healing. Meanwhile my sister is raising four children. My life is presently opening to new and powerful inner spiritual healing.

*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).*



RECYCLE YOUR CELL PHONES AND HELP RAISE MONEY FOR THE MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION. IF YOU HAVE A CELL PHONE TO RECYCLE, CONTACT KATHRYN WHITTLEY AT 606-9282.

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.

## Hello from Wasacz Hilley & Fullerton LP

As of July 1, 2010, Wasacz Hilley & Fullerton LLP represents the majority of the children in dependency cases in Marin County. We love representing minors in dependency cases, and are committed to bettering kids' lives in Marin County. Our partnership consists of Mark Wasacz, Lara Hilley and Ahtossa Fullerton. Our practice is almost exclusively juvenile dependency cases. Mark has been practicing for almost 20 years. Mark also represents minors in high conflict family law cases and acts as a judge pro tem for the juvenile court in San Francisco. Lara has been practicing for 12 years. She just had her first baby in June, but looks forward to coming back to a new practice in Marin County. Ahtossa has been practicing for 12 years. She lives in Mill Valley and is enthusiastic about working with the kids in her home county. As you can imagine, it has been an exciting time for our firm. We took on a large number of cases literally overnight, and have been working hard to help make sure each and every child has what he or she

needs in order to thrive. It is our hope that parents get the necessary services they need in order to reunify with their children. When that is not an option, our goal is to see that each child finds a home with a loving and responsible adult who will see that child into adulthood. We see foster parents as key partners in our work. Frankly, we feel that foster parents and relative caregivers are the real heroes in these kids' lives. We actively seek any and all feedback from foster parents. Each county has its own norms and expectations, and we hope to get input from all the stakeholders in order to make this transition seamless and successful. We recognize and appreciate the sacrifice and hard work of foster parents. The system could not work without you! We have already seen such incredible love and devotion from Marin foster parents, and look forward to meeting each and every one of you as we see your placements.

Please do not hesitate to contact us. We can be reached at 1.888.942.8881.

## Welcome New Member At Large

The Marin Foster Parent Association is happy to welcome Annette Venables aboard our board as a Member At Large. Annette brings a lot of experience from working on several committees and boards including her children's PTA and Kiddo! - an organization that supports the arts in Mill Valley for grades K-8. She is excited and enthusiastic to help us achieve our goal of improving the lives of children in foster care, and we are excited to have her!

### 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

Christine Andrews (785-3316)

Mimi Katz (492-0207)

Kathryn Jordan-Whittley  
(898-5677)

Linda Gregory (479-8702)

Annette Venables (272-5187)

### Newsletter Crew

Carol Ihlenburg  
Barbara Sabido  
Paula Starrett



# 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; \$ 50.00 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!