



# December 2011 Newsletter

## 'Tis The Season By Carol Ihlenburg

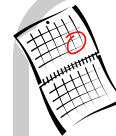
This year's annual CASA holiday party was another fun and successful evening. The Strawberry Recreation Center in Mill Valley was filled with families and a festive atmosphere. The MFPA provided popcorn for munching and coats, clothes, shoes and school supplies for the taking. All the children got to sit on Santa's lap and received a bag of goodies. They were also able to make crafts and eat pizza and yummy desserts. Thank you to Danyea Tylman at Marin Advocates For Children for coordinating a wonderful event for everyone. And thank you to all who volunteered to help serve popcorn and keep the donations flowing!

On January 7th, the MFPA board will discuss our goals and hopes for the new year at our annual planning retreat. We would love input from you in the foster parent community as to what you'd like offered by your

association in 2012. We welcome any ideas for trainings and/or events you'd like to attend.

Highlights from 2011 include the Champagne and Chocolate Classical and Jazz Concert Fundraiser, the annual May Meet and Greet with foster parents and social workers, participation in The Marin Human Race also in May, our annual picnic in June, and our holiday celebrations in December. And, now offered quarterly, the awesome Soup Groups hosted by Mimi Katz. Quarterly policy meetings were attended by MFPA board members and CFS management to communicate questions and concerns from both entities. We received grants for enrichment, to hire interns and to use toward our goal of establishing a Distribution Center for Foster Children. 2011 was a good year!

The holidays and the end of the year seem to be the perfect time to thank those who have been a significant presence in our lives and acknowledge the value of relationships. On behalf of the MFPA, I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of you who give of yourselves year-round by helping the most vulnerable of our population—the children who are unable to live with their biological families. We are all committed to helping these children thrive and succeed in life. They say it takes a village, and that is so true in the work we do. The children who enter our homes bring many emotions and feelings that affect everyone. Not only do we provide daily care but also work together with all the people associated with each child. The MFPA is here to support you in this challenging task. We wish you a very happy and healthy 2012!



## Upcoming Events

- ☺ **January 7:** MFPA Board Annual Planning Retreat, Mill Valley, 11 am—2 pm
- ☺ **January 10:** Seneca Kinship Care Support Group, San Rafael, 6-7:30 pm
- ☺ **January 11:** MFPA Meet and Eat, San Rafael, 6:30—8:30 pm
- ☺ **January 17:** Seneca Adoption Support Group, San Rafael, 5:30-7:30 pm
- ☺ **January 24:** Understanding Grief and Loss, San Rafael, 1-2:30 pm
- ☺ **January 26:** MFPA California Pizza Kitchen Fundraiser, Corte Madera, All Day
- ☺ **January 27:** Soup Group, San Rafael, 12-2:30 pm

## Why Does The Newsletter Layout Keep Changing?

The MFPA newsletter has gone through several transitions this year. Beginning last month, we will be alternating the creation between Barbara Sabido, Carol Ihlenburg and Linda Gregory. Paula Starrett is the editor. The deadline for submissions to the monthly newsletter is typically the 15th of every month—by noon. Occasionally, this may fluctuate by a day or so. If there is anything you think is relevant for the foster parent community, please send your typed submission to the MFPA email address at marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com. Any questions you have concerning foster parenting are also accepted. The Marin County Children and Family Services Licensing department submits an article each month and are happy to answer any questions concerning licensing and foster care regulations. We also have access to legal advisors as well as therapists to assist with questions in the areas of dependency law and/or behavioral issues. The newsletter is for you—any comments and/or suggestions are welcome!

The Marin Foster Parent Association received many generous donations for foster children for the holidays this year. We'd like to take this time to acknowledge their generosity...

- Sleep Train's Foster Kid's Program donated gift cards and toys
- Richard Mountain donated cash for gift cards
- Friends of Marin Center donated tickets for the Stapleton Ballet's Nutcracker and Marin Dance Theater's Sophie and the Enchanted Toyshop
- The Northwoods Bowmen's Club in Novato donated toys
- Marin Ballet donated 45 tickets for foster families to attend The Nutcracker
- Mill Valley Middle School families donated holiday baskets
- Charity of the Month donated Target gift cards
- Stephanie Blythe (madidoll) donated dolls



## Noteworthy

**PAY ATTENTION: New Location and Day For Meet and Eat:** January's Meet and eat will be held on WEDNESDAY, January 11th. The location has changed as well. We will be meeting at the Bay-Marín Community Church located at 150 N San Pedro Road in San Rafael. Take the N San Pedro Road exit and go East. The church will be on your right. Use the driveway right next to Abbey's Montessori. If you see the JCC, you've gone too far. Park in front of the church or in the Student Center (next parking lot just east of the church). The Meet and Eat will be held in the café, which is the building right next to the church. Same format and time. Hope to see you there!

**Welcome to our newest intern:** We are happy to welcome Rachelle Wright to our MFPA team as the newest intern to assist with many of the administrative tasks involved in keeping our association running smoothly. From Rachelle: "I have dreamed of helping foster youth for a few years now. I understand what it feels like not to know where home is. I believe that bringing awareness is the key to having others help as well. My goal is to someday start an organization that helps foster youth transition from being in foster care to pursuing their dreams and getting on their feet. Being able to be a part of an organization such as MFPA is great be-

cause it's one step closer to helping these children. I'm incredibly happy and blessed to be a part of MFPA. I hope to learn as much as I can. I appreciate this opportunity."

**Voting and Joining:** You should have received a membership application in the mail in the last couple of weeks. If you are a current member, you also received a ballot for the MFPA 2012 Executive Board Members. Although those running for offices were unopposed, we wanted to insure we were official in our election process in our attempt to comply with the election by-laws set forth by our parent organization, the California State Foster Parent Association. If you haven't done so, please return your ballot and membership application. If you are not a current member of the MFPA, this is the year to make the move! Our volunteers work hard to obtain benefits and opportunities for your family. Your membership and support is what makes it all possible.

**Ring Ring Ring:** We need someone who enjoys talking on the phone and has a couple of hours a month to help with the phone tree. These calls



are to remind foster parents of upcoming events being offered. They also offer a time to provide outreach and communication. If you would like to help out with this monthly task, please contact Jonathan Toste at 258-9459.

**Donation Update:** Sleep Train Foster Kid's Program collected \$250.00 in their Dollar Drive for extracurricular activities for foster children. If you have a foster child who would like to apply for this funding, please contact us at marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com or (415) 507-0557.



**How about a Bike Ride?** Are your kids interested in biking? Are you looking for a fun, outdoor physical activity to keep them in shape? Trips for Kids has some great adventures at a price that is right (\$25/trip—NOT per rider). If you are interested in coordinating a bike trip, please contact us. It would be a great way to use one of those holidays!

## Op/Ed Submission: Resiliency Vs. Attachment By Jonathan Toste

Social workers, foster parents and foster children all face the risk of vicarious trauma, defensive attachment and dysfunctional resilience. "Feeling too unsafe, too much separation or shame causes defensive attachment – the armor becomes strong but not the child," said Dr. Gordon Neufeld recently at a conference on behavioral psychology. We want secure attachment for our kids and "safe" detachment for ourselves. Safe, meaning that, as foster parents and social workers, we must operate as safe, loving havens for our kids, while staying detached from the losses (and vicarious trauma) – for ourselves.

While a foster parent's job is to create secure attachment between themselves and the child, the social worker, judge, CASA etc., have the job of staying detached and finding out which critical elements will best benefit the child's overall life.

Resiliency is the ability to cope with stress and adversity. It is a process that reveals itself as adults and children go through the steps of their suffering and productively overcome big losses, such as separation

trauma, and create new avenues of behavior.

Below you will find some hidden factors and simple practices that I have found to reduce conflicts between foster parents and social workers and their clients in their ultimate goals of creating secure attachment and resiliency for the clients.

Factor number one: the social worker has way more information about the child than the foster parent will ever know about – AND – the foster parent does also. The information is just from a number of different sources.

Number two: time constrictions and privacy laws keep a huge amount of critical issues to all involved from ever being shared. Or, even harder to accept, items that are known by the social worker but can't be confirmed to the foster parent or vice versa for various reasons.

Simple Practice #1: Choose well which items you share and how you relay the information. Too much information creates "crying wolf

syndrome" – i.e. critical participants STOP listening to each other.

Simple Practice #2: Don't take the issues and personalities you encounter personally. As the saying goes: "you can lead a social worker, lawyer, judge, foster parent, foster child to water, but you can't make them drink."

Simple Practice #3: Keep a journal. The dates and sequence of issues and communications are often key to safely detaching yourself from feelings of failure or solving issues at a later date – such as at a court hearing.

No matter how well you present the information you feel is critical, for your own emotional stability, at some point you must let go!

Creating secure attachment for ourselves and our children means finding and teaching coping mechanisms – simple tools that help bridge the losses and allow new threads of attachment to be woven into healing garments.



## Funding Available For Enrichment

Thanks to a grant from the Marin Charitable Association, the Marin Foster Parent Association was awarded \$3,500 in funding to assist foster children between the ages of 11 and 18 with the cost of valuable after school enrichment. If you are currently caring for a child in this age range, who is part of the dependency system, PLEASE APPLY FOR THIS FUNDING! There is a cap of \$500 per family, per year. If, at the end of the year, there is still funding remaining, families may reapply. The goal of this funding is to provide foster children with the extra assistance or enrichment 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 served basis with a combined monthly maximum amount of \$400, to be distributed amongst all approved applicants. 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 [marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com](mailto:marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com). We are excited to offer this assistance to our foster families!



## Join Us For Dinner and Help Raise Funds for MFPA

Last year, the MFPA held its first California Pizza Kitchen fundraiser. It was a lot of fun for foster families to meet at CPK for dinner and was successful in raising over \$200! So, we decided to participate again this year. The date is Thursday, January 26th. If you'd like to join other foster families, please come to the restaurant in Corte Madera (Town Center) between 6-7 pm. Bring in the attached flyer to give to your waiter, so the MFPA will receive 20% of whatever you purchase. If you are unable to make it for dinner, the event is all day and can be used towards take-out orders – you can help out by ordering out or having lunch there as well. Please make copies of the flyer and pass along to your friends, family, neighbors, co-workers—anyone who may want to participate!!



## Licensing Corner

### Maintaining Confidentiality In Daily Interactions By Cindy Wasserman, MSW



As foster parents, most of you understand the basic tenets of confidentiality as it pertains to children in your care. A child's personal history and situation, as well as any details concerning that child's family must be held in the strictest confidence. Maintaining confidentiality is an important responsibility; it is an ethical and legal obligation. Aside from being required by law, maintaining a child's confidentiality is key when establishing trust, demonstrating respect, and helping a child fit in.

It may be common knowledge that foster parents and CFS staff work as a team to make sure confidentiality is upheld during the placement process. Together, we take care that it is not breached in the media (children in care may not be photographed by the media, nor are they identified in any way) and that children's records are kept in a private, safe location. Foster children have the right to make and receive confidential phone calls and to send and receive unopened mail. Obviously, your neighbor does not need to know a foster child's medical history and your relatives are not privy to whether the child's biological parent is complying with court orders.

But what about the nuances of confidentiality: the ways these rules apply in daily interactions? If foster parents cannot reveal that the children in their care are, indeed, in the child welfare system, how do you handle

those potentially awkward moments when you want to introduce them to others at church, or when responding to the puzzlement of others when they cannot help but note that your children do not resemble you in any way? Here are some helpful hints, culled from the suggestions of other foster parents, staff and other resources, which may prove useful, especially during holiday gatherings:

- ◆ When introducing children in foster care, feel free to give their first names. You could simply say, "These are my kids, Rose and Joel." Or, you could say, "These are the kids I get to take care of today; their names are Rose and Joel," or, "These are my friends, ..."
- ◆ You may identify as a foster parent, however you must do so without identifying the children as foster children (and without inferring as much.) Although others might connect the dots, please do not spell it out.
- ◆ Remember that although you are not at liberty to disclose that the child is in foster care, it is their prerogative to self-identify as such. That is to say, children in foster care have the right to disclose that they are in the child welfare system. You may choose to gently redirect children, if you feel they disclose too much information
- ◆ A good rule is to keep conversations about foster children general and positive in nature. Talk about activities the children in your home are involved in. Promote self-esteem by talking about interests and strengths when introducing children. You might say, "This is Rose, and she likes to play soccer and to help me cook."
- ◆ When responding to someone who knows you are a foster parent, be sure to answer questions about children in general ways. Many people are curious about foster care; instead of talking about specific children, try sharing something about why you became a foster parent.
- ◆ Make sure children's records are kept out of sight, especially when hosting gatherings.
- ◆ Teach other children in your home about the importance of confidentiality. It may be natural for siblings to fight when they are mad, but stress that it is never okay for them to share anyone else's personal information.
- ◆ When talking with friends or others who are curious about foster care, be sure to talk about your experiences in general terms. Do not describe a child in a way that makes them readily identifiable. Please remember, Marin is a small county.

## MISSION STATEMENT AND GOALS

The mission of the Marin Foster Parent Association is to achieve consistent, safe, quality care for the well being of all foster children by providing support services and advocacy to Foster and Adoptive Families, Relative and Non-relative caregivers.

The Marin Foster Parent Association is a nonprofit, volunteer run organization. We provide educational trainings, distribute monthly newsletters and host events to bring foster parents and their families together to provide support and exchange information. We work and communicate directly with the Department of Health and Human Services, Children and Family Services division and in partnership with the entire community we serve. We actively advocate for foster children and their caregivers. We obtain and distribute donations and necessities for foster children.

Our primary objectives and purposes are as follows:

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 set forth below.

To promote the general welfare of children and youth that need protective care (out of home placement) everywhere: at home, in the communities, in institutions and in public, private and religious schools.

To promote cooperation, communication and understanding between those providing care for children and the general public and all organizations/agencies involved in the lives of children in the dependency system by encouraging and maintaining communications, and the interchange of ideas and cooperation between the caregivers, county agencies and communities.

To cooperate, advocate and take actions necessary to improve foster care services.

To encourage community involvement and offer training and education of those who provide care to children in the dependency system.

To inform the foster care community of the current information pertaining to the welfare of children.

Notwithstanding the above statements, the chapter shall not, except for insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the primary purpose.



## New Law Concerning Those Aging Out of Foster Care

An important new law gives foster youth the option to remain in foster care and receive services and support until age 20!

**Things to Know:** This new program begins January 1, 2012. If a foster youth turns 18 on or after January 1, they can stay in foster care up to age 20 as long as they meet eligibility requirements. The program is voluntary. Should the foster youth decide to leave foster care, they can return, provided they meet the requirements. They will need to meet with their social worker or probation officer, go to court and

continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

**Eligibility:** Foster youth are eligible for this program if they are doing at least one of the following: (1) Completing high school or an equivalent program, (2) Enrolled at least half-time in college, community college or a vocational education program, (3) Employed at least 80 hours a month, (4) Participating in a program/activity designed to remove barriers to employment, or (5) Unable to do any of the above because of a medical condition.

**Where Foster Youth Can Live:** Foster youth must live

in one of the following places to be eligible for this program: (1) Home of a relative, non-related extended family member or legal guardian, (2) Licensed or approved foster home, (3) Transitional Housing Program Plus Foster Care (THP+FC), (4) Supervised Independent Living Program (SILP), or (5) Group Home.

To learn more about this program foster youth should ask their social worker, probation officer or attorney. Visit [www.facebook.com/CAFosteringConnections](http://www.facebook.com/CAFosteringConnections).

### Officers

#### **Linda Gregory, President**

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### Newsletter Crew

**Carol Ihlenburg  
Barbara Sabido  
Linda Gregory  
Paula Starrett**

Special thanks to College of Marin's Foster and Kinship Education Program and the Department of Health and Human Services Children and Family Services for making the printing and distribution of this newsletter possible.



The Marin Foster Parent Association in collaboration with College of Marin's Foster and Kinship Care Education Program offers:



## “HOW CAN YOU ACHIEVE LASTING HAPPINESS?”

Start the New Year off on a glad path. Let “Project Happiness,” a feature length documentary film created by a team of award-winning filmmakers, set you on a path toward greater happiness.

With the unspoken epidemic of stress and depression infiltrating every community, how can kids (of all ages) learn to generate their own happiness regardless of the situations they face? Follow three groups of high school students from three continents on a quest to understand the nature of lasting happiness. What they discover uncovers the potential for happiness that is in us all.

Join us for a screening of the film followed by a facilitated discussion  
**LED BY JOAN ROANE MFT**

Joan has a private practice in San Rafael serving families. Her professional experience includes providing therapy and intern supervision at Family Service Agency, where she continues to volunteer as a facilitator for their Agesong program. She volunteered with CASA for a number of years, worked at a foster family agency as a family recruiter and social worker, and currently consults locally on foster care and adoption issues.

\*\*\*\*\*NOTE: NEW DAY AND LOCATION\*\*\*\*\*

### WHEN

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2012

6:30 – 8:30 pm\*

\*A social/dinner time will be hosted from 6:00 – 6:30 pm. To insure there is enough food and drink available, please RSVP to 479-8702 by JANUARY 9, 2012 if you are interested in attending this portion of the meeting.

### WHERE

**BAYMARIN COMMUNITY CHURCH**

150 N San Pedro Rd  
San Rafael

### QUESTIONS & RSVP

Call Linda Gregory at 479-8702

Childcare is available during the meeting (6:30-8:30 PM). Those using the childcare will be responsible for paying the provider, completing a reimbursement form and getting reimbursed by DHHS. The cost of childcare is \$5.00/hour per child with a cap of \$10.00/hour – i.e. the most you will need to pay is \$10.00/hour regardless of number of children. **Please RSVP to 415 479-8702 if you will need childcare with the number and ages of the children you will be bringing. If the childcare is full, and you did not RSVP, your child/ren may be turned away. You MUST RSVP by Monday, January 9th; if there are no RSVPs by this time, the childcare provider WILL BE CANCELLED.**

This meeting qualifies for required annual training hours for DHHS

Join us at  
**California Pizza Kitchen**  
for a flavorful FUNdraising event!

**Just bring in this flyer**, present it to your server,  
and **20%** of your check will be donated to our organization.  
Purchases include dine-in, take-out, catering and all beverages!

Fundraiser in support of

**Marin Foster Parent Association**  
**Thursday, January 26, 2012**

(All Day)

**California Pizza Kitchen**

347 Corte Madera Town Center

Corte Madera, CA 94925

415.945.0401

Go to [cpk.com](http://cpk.com) to view our pizzas,  
pastas, salads, appetizers & desserts.  
You can even order online!

Join the **CPK Adventure Club**  
at [cpk.com](http://cpk.com) and receive  
**\$5** off your next visit!



Eligible groups include non-profit schools and 501c organizations. Donation amount excludes proceeds from tax, gratuity, gift card and retail purchases. Valid for dine-in, take-out, online orders, catering or curbside service. Alcoholic beverages included. Not valid on delivery. Event proceeds void if flyers are distributed in or near the restaurant.  
Manager, please attach this flyer to the guest check.



## 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

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter , or would like to save postage and a tree or two, call (415) 507-0557 or email us at [marinfoosterparentassociation@yahoo.com](mailto:marinfoosterparentassociation@yahoo.com) to be removed from our mailing list.  
You can also request an ecopy of the newsletter!