



April Meet & Eat Highlights - Carol Ihlenburg

This month's Meet & Eat was an intimate and friendly sitdown discussion with Mark Wasacz and Ahtossa Fullerton, attorneys at law. Mark and Ahtossa's law firm, Wasacz, Hilley & Fullerton LLP won the contract with Marin County to represent children in the dependency system in Marin County for the next three years. They formally began working with Marin County dependency court in July 2010. Mark and Ahtossa are also members of the Marin Foster Parent Association, which is just one example of their commitment and desire to support and work with Marin County foster parents.

At the Meet & Eat, Mark and Ahtossa discussed the upcoming phase-in of Assembly Bill 12, which enables foster children to remain eligible for foster care benefits through the age of 21. This slow process, gradually being enforced, began January 1 of this year. They also talked about de facto parent status - what it is and who is eligible.

It was obvious that Mark and Ahtossa are committed to representing the best interests of our children - especially when Mark held one of his clients during the meeting not even noticing when he was being christened with drool! Welcome to Marin and thank you for your informative, informal evening with us, Mark and Ahtossa.

Next month, we are co-hosting, along with Children and Family Services and College of Marin's Foster and Kinship Care Education Program, what has now become our annual Meet and Greet. This event is a great opportunity to meet social workers while enjoying yummy food. It is also the time we present the annual Carol McKenna Award, acknowledging a foster parent and a social worker for his or her "unsung" contributions to the foster children of Marin County. See attached flyer for details. See you there!

Nominate a Social Worker Now!

The 2nd Annual Carol McKenna Unsung Hero Award will be presented to both a foster parent and a social worker who have gone "above and beyond" in their work with Marin foster children. The award recognizes the dedication and commitment of one foster parent and one social worker who has to date, gone unnoticed by his/her peers and/or colleagues. The social worker will be nominated by the foster parents. The foster parent will be nominated by the social workers.

April 30th is the deadline to submit nominations. Foster Parents: If you've had the opportunity to work with a social worker you feel deserves to be recognized, please submit your nomination with a paragraph or two about why you feel he/she should receive this honor. Please send your nomination either by email to marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com, fax to 472-2937, or regular mail to MFPA, PO Box 6726, San Rafael, CA 94903.

Social workers will be completing the process as well to acknowledge an outstanding foster parent.

Upcoming Events

**April 27th: Quarterly Policy Meeting**

San Rafael, 10:00AM-12:00PM

April 29th: Ross Greene Presentation

St. Vincent's, 9:30AM-5PM

May 1st: Picnic Committee Meeting

Mill Valley, 10:30AM-12:00PM

May 5th: MFPA Board Meeting

San Rafael, 9:30AM-11:30AM

May 6th: CAPSAC & CATA Presentation

San Francisco, 8:30AM-3:30PM

May 7th: Marin Human Race

Marin Center Fairgrounds 7:00AM-11:30AM

May 13th: Building a Movement for Kids

San Rafael, 8:30AM-10AM

May 18th: Immigration Law Seminar

San Rafael, 1:00-2:30PM

May 24th: Annual Meet and Greet

San Rafael, 4:00-5:30PM

June 1st: Caregiver Advocacy Network Meeting

Sacramento, 1:30PM-3:30PM

June 7th: College Resources for Foster Youth

San Rafael, 10:00-11:30AM

June 17th: 9th Annual MFPA Picnic

McInnes Park, San Rafael 12:30PM-3PM

For information on any of these events, contact Carol Ihlenburg or visit our website at www.mfpa.net.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

A time to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect and create strong communities to support children and families.



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 per 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-served basis with a combined monthly maximum amount of \$400, to be distributed amongst all approved applicants. Requests must be made for a foster child or child in the dependency system, and the funding must benefit him or 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. We are excited to offer this assistance to our foster families!

In 2011, Marin Charitable granted an additional \$3,500 to be distributed to children ages 11-18 for tutoring and educational needs.

Noteworthy

Event Opportunities in April

The MFPA sends out a heartfelt thank you to the San Francisco Giants and Cirque Du Soleil. Their generosity allowed us to offer over 11 families and their foster and foster-adopt children the opportunity to attend a Giants game or a performance of Quidam in San Francisco. The Marin Foster Parent Association continues to seek out opportunities for foster children and their families to attend events together. Because we usually get notice of these donations less than a month before the event, the information goes out via email. So, if you are not on our email list and would like to be informed of these opportunities, please email us at marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com. All tickets offered through Marin Foster Parent Association are done so with the intention of benefitting children in foster care. The organizations who donate the tickets want them to go to the underprivileged children who would ordinarily not be able to attend such events. When requesting tickets, please indicate who the tickets will be going to, including whether the children benefitting are foster children.

Thanks Starbucks!

The MFPA would like to thank the Starbucks in Northgate for their

generous donations of the "Thank You" gifts we give to the people who present at our monthly meetings. Thanks Starbucks!

Phone Tree



Could you call a few, say 10, fellow foster parents each month? Our phone tree callers reach out to foster parents once a month to see how

they are doing, remind them about our monthly Meet and Eat and to check if they are getting this wonderful newsletter. We break for a few months during the summer and, even if you could just be a stand-in once in a while, it sure would help us out. Please call our phone tree chairman, Jonathan Toste: 415-258-9459 or jjtoste@gmail.com.

Membership

If you haven't joined the MFPA yet, don't wait any longer! Your membership assists us when we need to apply for grants, funding, tickets and donations. Currently, our membership is 53. There is a membership application on the back page of this newsletter. Only \$35 for individuals and \$50 for a family - the best deal in town!

In Memory of John Abramson

Thanks to the generous donations received in memory of longtime foster parent, John Abramson, we have distributed 9 Babies R' Us \$50 gift cards to foster parents caring for infants and children up to three years old.

Marin County Blue Ribbon Commission Update

The Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) was established to focus on identifying strengths and barriers to children in foster care. Juvenile dependency stakeholders and care providers are all part of this commission. The BRC meets quarterly. At this quarter's meeting, held last month, two subcommittees were formed - one on visitation and one on development of a Parent Mentor Program. If you are interested in learning more about the BRC, please contact Carol Ihlenburg at (415) 507-1822.

National Foster Care Appreciation Month

Each May, National Foster Care Month provides an opportunity to shine a light on the experiences of the more than 400,000 children and youth in the foster care system. The campaign raises awareness about the urgent needs of these young people and those who help them.

Fundraising & Partnership Update

Why Do We Fundraise?

The Marin Foster Parent Association usually holds one to two fundraisers each year to cover the costs of our overhead, provide support to our foster families and to host our annual picnic and co-host the annual holiday party. We are by no means a "wealthy" association. We rely on these fundraisers and in-kind donations for support.

THIS YEAR'S FUNDRAISERS

Champagne & Chocolate

This year we hosted a Champagne & Chocolate Classical and Jazz Concert at Jonathan Toste's home in San Rafael. Those who joined us enjoyed an evening of incredible talent in an intimate, "only in Marin" setting. This fundraiser brought in approximately \$1200.

eScrip

We partnered with the eScrip fundraising program this year. This program collaborates with local supermarkets and other retailers to donate a small percentage of sales to specified organizations each and every time you make a purchase at one of their stores.

Have you signed up and designated the Marin Foster Parent Association as the recipient of contributions based on your current spending? We have twelve people enrolled (THANK YOU) and have earned \$28 in the last two months. If we can double this amount, it would cover our monthly telephone costs. If we can triple this amount, it would cover our postage costs as well...eliminating overhead costs allows us to focus our spending on benefitting foster families with direct assistance!

This is the EASIEST, NO COST way you (and your family, friends, co-workers and neighbors) can support

our association. If you believe in what we do for foster families and enjoy the benefits we provide, go online and enroll in eScrip (or add MFPA to your list of organizations you currently support) TODAY! www.escrip.com. It only takes a few minutes to enroll, it's safe and it costs you NOTHING.

The Marin Human Race

The MFPA is participating in the Marin Human Race, taking place on Saturday, May 7th at the Marin Civic Center Lagoon. This is our final fundraiser and potentially our most profitable fundraiser of the year. Our fundraising goal is \$5000. As of now, we have ALMOST hit 50% of this goal, with only two active members participating.

It's not too late to join us! Even if you aren't interested in participating in the actual event - a nice walk/stroll/run around the lagoon - you can help us by asking your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers for their support. You can go online at www.marinhumanrace.org to join our team or, if you would like a sample "support letter" to email or send out, let Pam Salvadore know and she'll get one to you.

We would love to see you there.

Grant Proposals

The MFPA is currently actively seeking grant support in our community. We are looking to partner with several foundations and corporate sponsors to create a distribution center near the Health and Wellness campus in San Rafael.

With an MFPA distribution center, whenever you receive a new placement, you could stop by our offices to pick up items your foster child may need, including school supplies, pajamas, socks and underwear, hygiene items, etc. The

distribution center would also give us the ability to store the donated items we receive in one, central location in an organized manner. We anticipate it will also be a location for resource materials and information that will assist foster parents in providing care to their foster children.

If you know anyone who has empty office or retail space in this area or a business that might be willing to "share" some space with us, please help us connect with them by contacting Pam Salvadore at psalvadore@mac.com. We may be able to create a win/win partnership!

Grant writing is a major undertaking. Wish us luck!

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The MFPA works in collaboration and partnership with many different established community organizations including College of Marin's Foster and Kinship Care Education Program, Marin Advocates for Children, and Advokids. In addition, we have many partnerships with organizations who provide donations and support including Sleep Train's Foster Kids Program, The Pajama Program, K.I.D.S. (Kids In Distressed Situations), My Stuff Bag Foundation, Marin Center's Outreach Program and One Simple Wish.

As you can see, your MFPA Board Members are working hard to support your efforts as a foster parent and the children that are placed in your care. If you can, please try to support us through one of our fundraisers. Your two cents can make a big difference!



Civil Penalties by Julie Lenhardt

Civil Penalties is a topic no one really loves to discuss. It's truly unfortunate to think that anything serious enough could occur in a foster home that would require such harsh action. In Marin, we are grateful that such circumstances are extremely rare. We are blessed with foster parents who take wonderful care to ensure our children are safe and loved. Nevertheless, it's important to stay informed about new legislative developments and to stay abreast of issues that may impact some of our homes. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, I will provide a synopsis of Civil Penalties and Assembly Bill 978, which amends Health and Safety Code Section 1530.5 for foster family homes and provides immediate civil penalties for serious licensing violations that could result in injury or death to a child.



In short, AB 978 amends the list of violations for which we (Licensing) MUST assign civil (financial) penalties to include serious violations. The three main categories are:

- **Providing Unlicensed Foster Care**
- **Failure to Obtain Criminal Record Clearance on Adults Living in the Home**
- **Serious Violations**

Providing Unlicensed Foster Care:

It is doubtful that this applies to anyone reading this since you are all current or former licensed care providers. This applies to anyone operating a foster home without proper licensure. The penalty for such action is \$200 per day after the 15th day, if the home has not ceased operation or filed an application to become a licensed foster home. Ouch!

Failure to Obtain Criminal Record Clearances on Adults Living in the Home:

As you know, all adults in the home must be cleared. This includes all adults living in the home for more than 30 days, and those who have significant contact with the children (i.e. a nanny, an aunt or uncle who comes to the home every day and helps watch the children, etc.). An adult is defined as anyone over the age of 18, however the exception to this is a child who remains a Dependent of the Court past the age of 18 and is still a foster child in the home.

In general, adults may visit the home for up to 30 days without clearances (unless they are in a care giving role and have significant contact with the child) but after those 30 days, they are considered an uncleared adult in the home and civil penalties apply. This is good to keep in mind if you have college kids away at school, who come home in the summer, as they will need to be cleared. What's the penalty for uncleared adults? It is \$100 per day for each uncleared person in the home for a maximum of 5 days for the first violation. If a second violation occurs within one year, the \$100 per day penalty can be assessed for up to 30 days! If you know this situation may come up for you (i.e. you have a current foster child who plans to stay after 18 but will no longer be a dependent, or you have a child coming home from college) please speak with your licensing worker ASAP. We will be happy to assist with live scan forms to help you avoid this situation. Also, please remember that this rule applies even if you are not currently caring for foster children.

Serious Licensing Violations:

These violations are called serious for a reason: these are violations

that are so serious they could easily result in serious injury or death of a child. Because they are so serious, the State has told us that they will be asking us to assess civil penalties of \$150 per day per violation. These violations are:

- Fire clearance violations - this only applies to homes that are required to get a fire clearance through the fire department to be licensed for children with specific needs. We currently do not have any homes in Marin that require fire clearances.
- Absence of supervision around bodies of water - this applies when the caregiver did not use Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS) around bodies of water accessible to the child. If RPPS was used, no penalties will be issued.
- Accessible firearms, ammunition or both - this speaks for itself. Guns and ammunition must be inaccessible and tightly locked.
- Presence of an excluded person on the premises - if someone has been excluded by licensing and they are found at the home, this constitutes a serious licensing violation.
- Refused entry of authorized licensing staff.
- Violations that result in the death or serious injury of a foster child - this applies when the violation is the reason for the injury or death.

Thankfully, all of these situations are extremely rare. However, it is always best to be informed. Please feel free to contact me or your LPA if you have any questions regarding civil penalties.



Chronicles of Adoption

Issue 90 April 20, 2011

By Jonathan Toste

Interviewee: Margaret Saldariaga

Read, my friends, and you will find the tale of how Mayor Moscone, a truant child, a couple of nuns and a really good judge made great things happen. Now everyone is happy, with neary a grudge.



What history do you know about your biological family?

I know that my family is Colombian; I am the third from the oldest of five kids, and I was born in San Francisco in 1950.

When I was only four years old, Mom and Dad had a horrible fight. The police came and my Dad said that it would just be he and us kids from then on. I remember feeling completely numb for a really long time. Not long after that, my parents officially divorced.

Dad totally shut out my mother and took sole custody of all five of us, but since he worked for United Airlines, we spent a lot of time in the care of others and later became latchkey kids.

I didn't see my mother again until I was twenty-three years old. She was living in Federal housing. When we met, all she did was talk about herself. I can only guess that she was trying to justify her complete abandonment of us. I felt no emotional attachment to her. I didn't even have compassion for her.

At what age, and for how long were you in adoptive or foster care?

I was fifteen years old when I entered the foster care system. My three older brothers, one younger sister and I had all become such latchkey kids that we had stopped

going to school entirely. We would intercept the truancy notices in the mail so our father wouldn't get them. One day he caught up with us. We ended up in court over the truancy issue and my sister, Oralita, and I were sent to Juvenile Hall. Our grades improved greatly, since there was nothing better to do in lockup. My Dad took those improvements to the social workers and the nuns at Notre Dame de Vitois and arranged for my sister and I to attend their boarding school.

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

I was lucky enough to have two comforting things happen, from two different sources.

First of all, the nuns at school allowed me to date my boyfriend (against my father's wishes - he didn't like that my boyfriend was black). They felt that if I kept my grades up and had a job, I could handle the relationship.

Secondly, that job ended up being in Mayor Moscone's office under the watchful eye of his secretary, Mrs. Brady. Now, Mrs. Brady was an eighth generation Irish mother of seven kids. Taking me under her wing was not anything new to her. But she kept an eye on me and, when funding ran out for my position, she arranged for me to work at a law firm. It was the law firm job that trained me as a legal secretary and opened the door to a new future.

What kind of "fantasy option" (not totally unrealistic) did you wish was available to you to solve the big issues you faced growing up?

I always wished that I was an only child. It was really hard to get my Dad's attention when I had to compete with four siblings.

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

I have a great sense of adventure. I credit my Dad for that. He used to load us all up in the car on weekends and take us to explore new places like the Mendocino redwoods, the Sonoma coast, Napa Valley, Santa Cruz and Lake Tahoe. Those trips made me love exploring and meeting new people.

Another strength that I have is that I am very strong willed and independent. That's probably from the time I spent between Juvenile Hall and boarding school. However, you do end up learning flexibility when you bounce around like I did.

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



MISSION STATEMENT/BYLAWS

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:

- 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 that need protective care everywhere: at home, in the communities, in institutions and in public, private and religious schools.
- 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.
- 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.
- To inform ourselves 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.



Welcome New Foster Family, the Hawkins/Bensens

Marin County Children and Family Services welcomes Christina Hawkins and Donald Bensen as newly licensed foster parents.

Together, with seven-year-old Cassandra, this family looks forward to caring primarily for school-aged boys and girls (preferably 5-8 years old or so). They would also love to foster younger children if adequate support systems are in place. They are licensed for two. Christina is a speech and language pathologist, and Donald works for Hospice by the Bay as an I.T. Customer Support Specialist. Cassandra is in the first grade and enjoys math, P.E. and gymnastics. A self-described movie buff and animal lover, Donald's interests also include history, politics and chess. Christina enjoys working with children and highly values family, education and spending time with loved ones.

This is a warm and communicative family with a great deal to offer. Christina and Donald are also amazingly organized and will undoubtedly provide a stable, calm and loving home for children in need.

Issue 90 April 20, 2011

2011 MPFA Board Members

Executive Board

Linda Gregory, President
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**Jonathan Toste, Vice President/
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Annette Venables, Secretary
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Carol Ihlenburg, Treasurer
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Members At Large

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Kathryn Jordan-Whittle
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Newsletter Crew

Pam Salvadore - Editor
Carol Ihlenburg
Barbara Sabido
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.

We held a lovely soup group get-together at my house in March, and many new faces joined in for lunch, laughs and bonding. We added a bit of structure to the luncheon, and kept on-task with discussions about transitions and how to deal with kids moving in and out, not only for foster kids, but for biological children also. It is often stressful for bio-kids to feel loss and movement when foster children leave. We discussed preparing for transitions and adjusting when family size grows and shrinks. It was amazing for foster parents to share their feelings about this, and to recognize how many similar feelings are floating around in regards to loss and adjustment. We also talked about the “yo-yo” effect; repeat placements, when foster kids return after an unsuccessful reunification, bring a unique set of feelings, and it was useful to share about this.

New faces at lunch included Joyce Curell, Carol Ihlenburg, Laura Abramson, Linda Gregory, Lisa and Katlin Pena, Barbara Ahern, Jilma and Loren Edwardson, and Annette Venables.

I will do a soup group luncheon quarterly, and hope to keep roping in the foster parents who are so busy with their lives and responsibilities that they have a hard time taking the occasional lunch date for themselves. I will continue to reach out to you. (And please forgive me if I am misspelling names...I am bad at that!)

Right now, I am welcoming springtime by taking walks in the lovely weather with my trusty dog, and hope to pull a bunch of you together again in summertime. My wonderful chickens are laying fresh eggs like there is no tomorrow. We eat quiche, omelets and custard regularly! It's lovely to be a part of this caring Marin County community of foster parents. Please join us next time - not potluck, kids welcome, no prep or clean up necessary!

MFPA 9th Annual Picnic



A few good volunteers needed for this year's

DUNK TANK

Can you volunteer for a 15 minute shift in the dunk tank? You'll be the coolest person at the picnic! Shifts begin at 12:30—the first volunteers get the time slot of their choice!

- **McInnis Park**
- **San Rafael**
- **Friday, June 17, 2011**
- **12:30—3:00 PM**

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Contact Carol Ihlenburg if you can help out (and give the kids, perhaps adults) a good target!

Contact person: 507-1822/cihlenburg@comcast.net



Marin County Health and Human Services Children and Family Services, College of Marin Foster and Kinship Care Education Program, and the Marin Foster Parent Association invite you to a

Foster Parent -Social Worker Meet and Greet

The 2nd Annual Carol McKenna Award will be presented to a selected foster parent and a social worker!

Date: Tuesday, May 24, 2011

Time: 4:00-5:30 pm

Questions: Call Linda Gregory at
415-479-8702

Where: *Health and Wellness
Campus
3240 Kerner Blvd. #109
San Rafael, CA 94901*

*Finger food and
beverages will be
provided!*

*Children welcome. There
will be an art table set up
for the children during the
event.*



The Marin Foster Parent Association in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services Children and Family Services invites you to our:

9th Annual Foster Family



MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

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

(415) 507-0557

www.mfpa.net



M F P A M E M B E R S H I P A P P L I C A T I O N

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