



# August 2011 Newsletter



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## A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT By Linda Gregory

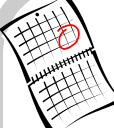
Happy late summer! It's an exciting time for MFPA! We received a \$1,500 grant from Union Bank to launch our Distribution Center For Foster Children, a centrally located space where foster families, especially those with new placements, can pick up clothing, school supplies and other useful items. We are looking for a venue with storage and a small office for volunteers and our soon-to-be hired interns! Thanks to Steve Kinsey, of the Marin Board of Supervisors, MFPA has funding for one to several internships to be filled by persons who were once foster children. Applications are currently being accepted to help with a

cepted to help with a wide variety of projects (see page 2). We'd welcome your ideas and help with creating the Marin MFPA DC. Contact the DC team: Carol Ihlenburg, Cesar Lagleva, or Barbara Sabido.

I'd like to thank Pam Salvatore for bringing her amazing skills, boundless energy and inspiring ideas to our board for the past six months. Because Pam has taken on the directorship of Project Home Sweet Home she has left her seat on the board and sadly can't continue as editor of this newsletter, given the demands of her new job. Pam leaves some big shoes to fill, but we are grateful to have

worked with her and look forward with collaborating with Project Home Sweet Home. Check out their website at: [www.projecthomesweethome.org](http://www.projecthomesweethome.org).

Needless to say, now is the time we could use your help with the distribution center, our newsletter, phone tree, and/or on our board. An hour a month is not too little! Call me, or any board member, if you'd like to help, or just share your thoughts. Thanks to each of you for helping kids and families in our community. As Margaret Mead so truthfully said: 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has!'



### Upcoming Events

- ☺ **September 8:** MFPA Board meeting, San Rafael 9:30—11:00 am
- ☺ **September 13:** Understanding Attachment and Bonding, San Rafael, 12:00-1:30 pm
- ☺ **September 13:** MFPA Meet and Eat, San Rafael, 6:30—8:30 pm
- ☺ **September 13:** Parenting Across Racial Lines, Session 1, San Rafael, 6:30-8:30 pm
- ☺ **September 15:** Raising Resilient Kids, San Rafael, 7:00-9:00 pm
- ☺ **October 11:** Parenting Across Racial Lines, Session 2, San Rafael, 6:30—8:30 pm
- ☺ **October 25:** Examining the Cycle of Domestic Violence, San Rafael, 1-2:30 pm

## Updated Website

If you haven't been to the Marin Foster Parent Association website, check it out at [www.mfpa.net](http://www.mfpa.net). We have just updated the site and added links to our Facebook page and Escrip page. Newsletters from the last three years are

available should you need to reference something. On our Resource page, there is a list of different agencies such as Marin Advocates For Children, Advokids, Children and Family Services, and more with their contact informa-

tion. On our Programs page, you can view all of our partners with whom we work and from whom we receive donations. We've recently updated our mission statement and goals which can be found on the home page.

**Oversight in June 2011 newsletter: We want to thank California Pizza Kitchen for their generous donation of 15 pizzas to our annual picnic. We apologize for the oversight! The pizzas were delicious as always.**

## Licensing Corner

### It Takes a Community to Recruit a Foster Parent

As you know, I am the child welfare worker who coordinates the recruitment and licensing of new foster families. Over the years, many of you have made my job easier by referring wonderful individuals and families to CFS, and by co-leading monthly information meetings. Often times, word of mouth is a very effective means of recruitment; once a person knows a foster parent and sees how it is to care for children in need, they are more likely to consider this work for themselves. With this in mind, I wonder if any of our licensed foster parents would like to help me further by getting the word out and playing a more significant role in the recruitment process. Maybe you could help me organize a brief presentation to parents at your local school district, or to others at your place of worship. Or, if you and perhaps another foster parent in your

By Cindy Wasserman, MSW; Child Welfare Worker II

area are willing to host an afternoon tea of sorts, to which you could invite friends, colleagues or neighbors who you think might be good foster parents, I would be happy to participate and co-present information with you. I believe I have Mimi to thank for this unique idea, as she mentioned it to me years ago; perhaps its time has come. I welcome any and all ideas you might have, especially if you are available to help set them in motion. You may also help by posting or distributing fliers.

CFS is sensitive to the fact that currently licensed foster parents sometimes wait several months before their first placement; other foster parents occasionally wait a long time between placements. Even so, the agency strives to increase its recruitment efforts because not only do we need more families but we must constantly enhance the diversity of our pool of foster parents so we can make the best matches possible. CFS is looking for foster parents of all ethnic

backgrounds, including Spanish-speakers. Families of all compositions and adults of any sexual orientation and age are encouraged to apply, and the agency always needs people of diverse interests, skills and personal histories.

Thank you to all of the foster and foster-adopt parents – you are all doing amazing work. I would love other members of the greater community to see how you shine. With a little luck, they might follow your wonderful example by opening their homes and sharing their lives with children in foster care.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please contact me via email at [cwasserman@co.marlin.ca.us](mailto:cwasserman@co.marlin.ca.us) or call me directly at 473-5028.



## Noteworthy



### Pepsi Refresh \$50K Distribution Center

For Foster Children Idea— Thank you to all of you who dedicated yourselves to "voting" daily at the Pepsi Refresh website for our DC project. Unfortunately, we did not end up in the top 10 projects that were funded. We came in at 140. Not too bad considering there were over 200 projects in the 50K tier. We had over 100 "likes" which is encouraging. We continue to seek funding for this very exciting project. Grant proposals have been submitted to several other potential funders. All we really need is approximately 1,000 square feet of space we can organize our many donations we have available for foster children.

Donations... speaking of donations, we have a fresh supply of school supplies from Sleep Train's Foster Kid's Program. Last Saturday, there was an open house



held for foster families to pick up school supplies.



We participated this summer in the The Little A's Program sponsored by Bank of America. We received bulk tickets to 3 different games in both June and August. Those who attended received keychains and cheered on the Athletics!



We are still accepting applications from former (or current) foster youth who can assist us with

some of the following tasks: (1) manage and coordinate our monthly trainings, (2) assist with the coordination and production of our monthly newsletters, (3) assist with

membership management, (4) update our website monthly, (5) assist with planning and organizing annual events, such as our picnic and holiday party, (6) coordinate fundraisers, and (7) assist with obtaining grants. This could be an ongoing, part-time position or a short-term position to work on one or two of the areas listed. If you feel you or someone you know who has been through the foster care system has skills that could be put to use in any or all of these items (we may hire more than one person to work in his/her area of expertise), please contact Carol Ihlenburg at [cihlenburg@comcast.net](mailto:cihlenburg@comcast.net) or at (415) 507-1822.

LOST AND FOUND: Found at the Meet and Greet, 1 small wooden whistle, shaped like a flute. Contact Linda Gregory (470-8702) if it is yours.

## Chronicles of Adoption By Jonathan Toste

*Interviewer: Jonathan Toste*

*Interviewee: Australia Piedmont*

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

I was born in East Los Angeles in 1980 and was in and out of foster care and kincare a half dozen times between the ages of 3 and 10 and a few more before I was emancipated at 18. My mom had my two older brothers with different dads, my brothers are 7 and 10 years older than me – and we are still really close. There was mental illness on my mom's side of the family and my dad's life was all about women and drugs.

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

My brothers and I were all removed from my mom when I was 3. We were placed in different homes and didn't see each other for two years. When I was 7, I went to live with my dad for about a year – we lived in a horrible ghetto in a one-room apartment. My grandmother lived in a hospital bed in the living room, my dad and his girlfriend/s slept in the bedroom - I slept on the couch. When my dad jumped from a window, high on LSD one night, I was removed from the home and went to live with an aunt and grandma from my mom's side along with one of my brothers. What I remember most about my time with my dad was that he made up this whole big set of lies about him loving me more than anything and him being a movie star (he had been an extra in a few movies) and that living with him was going to be "a movie star life" – what I learned was that he was

full of crap and he loved drugs and women way more than me – he just let me run wild.

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

At about 9, I was getting F's in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Gramma was using the foster care money she got for me and my brother to buy booze and cigarettes – and so my brother kidnapped me from school one day and took us to live in Sacramento with an aunt who was kind and loving and paid attention to us. I had to repeat a year of school, but my grades improved, and my aunt surprised me with my first ever surprise birthday party. I started to learn the difference between adults that lied to you and ones that loved you! We stayed with my aunt till I was 12. My brother joined the Marines and Aunt May got married. I was placed in a group home for a year and then got placed into a home I had been in when I was in second grade. At Lucille Baker's home I met up with a series of ups and downs, mostly due to her not being a loving person, putting me and my mother down (she had never even met my mother) – however, she was not even loving to her own biological children. I finally ran away at 16 and stayed with a friend for a while and then got placed with one of Lucille's older daughters – where I stayed till I graduated from high school. The earlier time with my aunt (who I now refer to as my mom) – was the most comforting thing in my life – mostly because she made me feel wanted and special and didn't make up stories and lies like my dad and others.

### 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 wished I had a "Ray Gun" that would force people to tell the truth. It often seemed my brothers and I were just a way for adults to get extra money from social services – the "truth gun" would not let them do that, it would cause them to love us and spend time and focus attention on us. That's what my auntie did – and she never had any kids of her own to teach her that.

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

Little steps ... I have this way of starting small and proving others wrong about how successful I can be – my last foster mom always told me I would turn out just like my mom – pregnant young and amount to nothing. I graduated high school early, started community college right away, got an AA degree, then a BA, was an officer in the Navy for 5 years and have just finished my Masters in Family Therapy. I am the proof that a ghetto child can break the cycle of poverty and ignorance and make a difference in the world – it just takes someone who is honest, loving and consistent at that critical time in your life.

*The above story is true; names may 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](mailto:jjtoste@gmail.com)*



## 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!

## 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.



## A Quiet Summer Soup Group

We are not having soup group monthly at this time but when we do get together, it is lovely to reconnect with families we **don't have a chance to** see often. I opened up the kitchen July 29 and made two summery soups, and we had a yummy get-together. Cream of As-



paragus, fattening and filling, and a beautiful Italian

White Bean with Bacon served with crusty bread. We scarfed cherry-brownies for dessert. A smaller crowd let us talk more intimately. The topics were mostly on managing kid behavior in a gentle way, setting limits for teens in a gentle way, and running a household during these financially trying times (in a gentle way!). It is hard to explain to kids **why we are "cinching our belts,"** and it sometimes takes a little balancing to provide for the kids in the

By Mimi Katz

generous way we were able to do 4-5 years ago. Joining me last month were Laura Abramson, Barbara Ahern, Loren and Jilma Edwardson, Maxeen Olinberg, and Nyala Wright. Next Soup Group is tentatively scheduled for October—by then, we may be anticipating a warm cup of soup and some companionship! Enjoy your last days of summer.

## Officers

**Linda Gregory, President**

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**Annette Venables, Secretary**

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## Newsletter Crew

**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.



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



## FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS (FASD) FROM BIRTH TO ADULTHOOD: CHARACTERISTICS AND WAYS TO ADDRESS THEM

PRESENTED BY:

**Kathryn Page, PhD**

Fetal alcohol damage affects between 2 and 5% of us in general; foster children are many times more likely to be affected. FASD is almost never considered by clinicians trying to help with difficult behavior, but often underlies symptoms of AD/HD, Oppositional-Defiant Disorder, the Autism spectrum, Bipolar Disorder and other diagnoses. This presentation will help you recognize the patterns and learn about best practices in supporting these challenging individuals.

Dr. Page is Mental Health Coordinator at Canal Alliance, and previously served as Clinical Director for FASD diagnostic clinics in Santa Clara and Lassen Counties. She is the adoptive mother of a young man with probable FASD, whose life would have much different had she known what she will share with you.

### WHEN

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2011

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 SEPTEMBER 10, 2011 if you are interested in attending this portion of the meeting.

### WHERE

The Connection Center on the Health and Wellness Campus  
3240 Kerner Boulevard, San Rafael  
(at the corner of Kerner and Bellam Blvds)

### 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, September 12th; if there are no RSVPs by this time, the childcare provider WILL BE CANCELLED.**

This meeting qualifies for required annual training hours for DHHS



## 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!