



Picnic Fun

by Carol Ihlenburg

This year's annual foster family picnic was, once again, a great success. The weather was perfect, and a fun time was had by all. Social workers, foster parents, attorneys and CASA's all enjoyed a day in the sun with the kids.

There was a lot of activity and excitement this year including a special, surprise visit from The San Francisco Giant's mascot, Lou Seal. It seemed the adults were more excited by his appearance than the kids! We had delicious barbecue chicken, sausage and tri-tip provided by Big Jim's BBQ/Smokehouse. To compliment the barbecued food, we had a variety of tasty foods provided by Comforts, Marin Joe's, Costco, Safeway, Andronico's, Scotty's Market, Whole Foods, Silbermann's Ice Cream, Eat My Kookies and Polly Anny Bakery. The bouncy house and dunk tank, provided by Astro Jumps, were both huge hits.

Thanks to our dunk tank volunteers Mark Wasacz, Cesar Lagleva, Juan Funes, Ted Erdman and new social worker Nicole Lock. Jenny Johnson acted as games coordinator and she got some sack races and a tug-o-war going in the field. The face painting done by Alana Dill was simply amazing!

The Donation Station was immense, thanks to donations from Sleep Train's Foster Kids Program, Scholastic Books, Sport's Basement, The Pajama Project, Levi's, Courage Brands, Walgreen's and Sanrio. Nobody went home empty handed.

The Marinwood Fire Department showed up with sirens going and allowed the kids to take turns sitting in the fire truck. Craig's Warehouse donated the colorful balloons that led the way to the picnic.

We had so many awesome volunteers this year. Thanks to the social worker crew who helped set up, headed by Kim Contreras and consisting of Tony Milani and Sarah Colton. The picnic committee was incredible: co-chaired by Susan Nasca and Carol Ihlenburg and joined by Linda Gregory, Annette Venables, Mimi Katz, Pam Salvadore, Ted Erdman and Mary Francis. We would also like to thank the CASA volunteers, Lisa Tanaka, Sally Dobbins, Mary Haller, Katy Tiemann and Laurie Good. In addition, we had volunteers from Levi's who assisted with the Donation Station - thank you, Monica Lucero and Jennifer Plotke. It takes a lot of people to provide such a fun event. I apologize, in advance, if I've forgotten anyone! To see more pictures visit www.mfpa.net and click on the "Events/ Training" tab, go to June and click on "view pictures from 9th Annual Picnic".



Upcoming Events

July 6th: Marin Services for Women, Women and Recovery
San Rafael, 9:00AM-11:30AM

July 8th: Bay Area Discovery Museum Summer Sunsets
Sausalito, 5:00-7:00PM

July 13th: Quarterly Policy Meeting, San Rafael
10:00AM-12:00PM

July 22nd: Bay Area Discovery Museum Summer Sunsets
Sausalito, 5:00-7:00PM

July 29th: Soup Group
San Rafael, 12:00-2:00PM

August 5th: Bay Area Discovery Museum Summer Sunsets
Sausalito, 5:00-7:00PM

August 13th: A's vs. Texas Rangers
Larkspur Landing, 10:45AM

August 21st: A's vs. Detroit Tigers
Larkspur Landing, 10:45AM

September 15th: Raising Resilient Kids, San Rafael, 7:00-9:00PM

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



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. We are excited to offer this assistance to our foster families!



Noteworthy



The MFPA has received a generous donation from Marin County Supervisor Steve Kinsey to help fund the hiring of an emancipated foster youth to assist our association in a variety of functions. The MFPA board extends a very grateful Thank You to Mr. Kinsey for supporting foster children and their caregivers! We are looking for someone to help with 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 or (415) 507-1822.

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME!



In August, we will be participating in the Oakland Athletics Little A's program to attend 2 ballgames! We'd like to organize a carpool and, possibly, a before-the-game tailgate party for both games. The dates of the games are as follows: Saturday, August 13th A's vs. Texas Rangers at 1:10 p.m. AND Sunday, August 21st A's vs. Detroit Tigers at 1:05 p.m. Anyone who would like to carpool or caravan can meet in the parking lot next to Fidelity Investments at Marin Country Mart (previously Larkspur Landing) at 10:45 AM. The aim for departure time is 11:00 AM to arrive at the Coliseum one hour before the game. This is a great opportunity for parents and kids to enjoy a fun day out! If you have any questions, please contact Carol Ihlenburg at cihlenburg@comcast.net or (415) 507-1822.

We're Taking the Summer Off!

There will be no newsletter, monthly training or MFPA board meeting in the month of July. There will be no monthly training or MFPA board meeting in August. Look for your next newsletter at

the end of August, just in time for back-to-school.

New Arrivals

Bree Marchman, Children and Family Services Ongoing Unit Supervisor, gave birth to a beautiful and healthy baby boy, named Julian, or "Jude" for short. Bree is exhausted, but happy.



Fire Squirts Camp of Marin



Week of June 27-July 1, 2011 (Monday-Friday 8:30AM-4PM). Open to all kids ages 10-14 years old, Fire Squirts was originally started by the Novato Fire Department for CASA kids. Fire Squirts offers an opportunity for kids to spend one week with local firefighters, doing activities such as rappelling from the drill tower, cutting apart a vehicle using the Jaws of Life, climbing an aerial ladder, learning how to use a fire extinguisher and more. Fire Squirts strives to provide children with a fun and safe environment to build trust, teamwork, self-confidence, and discipline, helping them reach their full potential. If you are interested, please contact Marin Advocates for Children at 415-507-9016.

Licensing Corner

Important Safety Recall

by Kathryn Nishimura



Many of you may have heard about the Drop Side Crib Recall initiated last year,

but for those of you who have not, please read on. The following was taken from various internet articles.

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) issued a recall of almost 2 million cribs that they believe to be dangerous. The concern is that most of the recalled cribs have what is called a “drop side”. This refers to the side of the crib where the side rail actually moves up and down so that it is easier to remove the child from the crib. The problem is that this mechanism can malfunction in a way so as to leave a large gap in the crib. The danger is that the child could then fall out of the crib, get strangled, or get trapped in the moving components. Although most of the models that were recalled had this feature, there were a couple that did not, but they were said to have other dangerous features.

For a complete list of the recalls and additional info, you can go to: CPSC crib recalls (<http://www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html>) and crib blog Q&A (<http://www.cpsc.gov/onsafety/2010/02/safe-sleep-part-1-the-crib/>). If you have further specific questions, you can email them to : feedback@cpsc.gov.

Comings & Goings



Happy Retirement to Pamela Doerr! After fifteen years working in Children and Family

Services (CFS) as a Senior Public Health Nurse, she is ready to move on and enjoy the next phase of her life. Most of you know Pam through working closely with her to coordinate medical care for foster children placed in your home. What you may not know are her many other functions in the agency and the contributions she has made to help improve the health care needs of children in our community. In addition to ensuring that children in placement receive appropriate medical care in a timely manner, she performs many other critical functions in our agency, including going out in the field with our Emergency Response social workers regularly to help assess children’s medical needs and educate parents on how to meet those needs; conducting trainings for foster parents on the special health care needs of many of our children; establishing and maintaining connections with local hospitals, clinics, and physicians to facilitate communication regarding the unique health care needs of foster children; participating in local collaboratives such as the Child Death Review Team, the Bay Area Foster Care Nurses Consortium, Collaborative for Academic and Practice Alliance to coordinate nursing internships; the Perinatal Substance Abuse Council; and supervising and training other Public Health nurses in our agency. Pam has worked

tirelessly over the years to develop a highly organized, efficient, and responsive foster care public health nursing program at CFS, and we are forever in her debt for her many contributions to our community . We wish her the very best as she embarks on new and exciting adventures in the next phase of her life. Pam’s official last day with the county is June 24th .



Please help us welcome Linda Mariscal, Public Health Nurse- Bilingual. We are sad to see

Pam Doerr leave but very happy to have Linda join our team. Linda brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in public health nursing and has been working with children and families in Marin since 1993. Prior to coming to Marin, she worked at San Francisco General Hospital as a Staff Nurse and at the Alameda County Public Health Department as Clinical Nurse and Public Health Nurse. Since joining Marin County Health and Human Services in 1993, Linda has worked in various county programs, including Communicable Disease, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Immunization Clinic, Foster Care, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention, and more recently Early Start. We are thrilled to have her, and I know you will enjoy working with her.

Linda currently works with us part-time, 20 hours a week. We are hoping to have another Public Health Nurse join us in the near future. We appreciate your patience during this interim period. We will do our best to make sure that you get the support you need to meet the medical needs of children in your care.

Social Worker Profile

Issue 92 June 21, 2011

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 Annette Venables at aagativen@sbcglobal.net.



Social Worker: Hadar Hartshorn

Position: Child Welfare Worker II

Why did you choose to work in the field of Social Work?

I came into the field of social work like many workers in the capacity of direct service, working with foster children that were placed in residential treatment facilities. Throughout my 20's, I went to seek out a diverse series of professional experiences, working with Nepalese child refugees from the Maoist insurrection, providing food for low-income families on a Native American Tiwa reservation, consulting for social service agencies in Varanasi (India), and spending a few weeks working in a Burmese refugee camp in Thailand.

How long have you been doing this work?

I've been working with Marin County for one year now, prior to which I was an intern for the department for a period of 9 months.

I feel very blessed to be working with such an incredible team in a field that allows such meaningful, positive change to take place. For me, there is nothing more significant than that basic experience of being human, and the work of trying to address and alleviate suffering. No other field provides the opportunity to work this closely with something as fundamental as the human experience and to help address the most basic fears we all carry, so to enable change in the lives of children and their families.

What are the most rewarding and most challenging parts of your work as a social worker?

I find that the most rewarding moments in my work are those in which a parent is able to let down their defenses, face their challenges, and recognize that there is someone here that is willing to walk a ways

with them until they are able to walk stronger on their own. The moment a parent is willing and able to accept help, the moment in which they are able to see their first step out of a situation, is the most moving moment. For me, it is always a great honor to be present in that process and instrumental in allowing space for that shift to occur.

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

I have really found that Marin County's foster parents are some of the most patient and dedicated families and individuals that I have ever had the opportunity to work with. I have no choice but to place a child in care. It's nice to know that I have a network of dedicated, hard-working people that are willing to open their home and shelter a child. That knowledge gives me the ability to confidently assure a parent that their child will be safe and well cared for as we move forward to overcome their challenges and help them develop those skills to be stronger parents.

Carol McKenna Award Winners Linda Gregory, President

May's annual Meet and Greet was a wonderful celebration of foster parents, social workers and children. It was a happy and inspiring event, and the food, as usual, was delicious - thanks to the efforts of Patty Cala!

Benigna Aguerrebere and Rob Thomas were both caught completely off guard when they each received a Carol McKenna Award for going above and beyond the call of duty in their roles as foster parent and social worker, respectively. Benigna said, through joyful and teary eyes, that being a foster parent "es mi vida" and everybody in the room cried too. Her dedication as a foster parent and ability to make children

feel safe and welcomed into her home, even in the middle of the night, was praised by Julie Lenhardt who presented the award. Scott Stitham presented the Carol McKenna Award to social worker, Rob Thomas. Scott's presentation was akin to reading a funny, yet deeply touching account of Rob's amazing ability to work with teen boys. Rob easily diffuses tense situations with a unique grace and his good-natured humor and sensitivity. These tools have helped many a troubled young man through the juvenile dependency system.

We applaud both Benigna and Rob for their hard work and dedication. It is our sincere hope that the Carol McKenna Award will go out to many, many more unsung heroes in the coming years.



Chronicles of Adoption

Issue 92 June 21, 2011

Interviewee: Claudia Skandish

By Jonathan Toste

A bizarre twist involving the classic example of children covering for an alcoholic parent.

What history do you know about your biological family?

I was born in Granite County, North Dakota in 1958. My parents divorced when I was six years old, which left my mom alone to raise six kids. I was the oldest girl and had two older brothers. After the divorce, I went to live with my grandmother. Soon after I moved in with my grandmother, my mom remarried and gave birth to a seventh child. My grandfather died a year later and that sent me back to live with my mom. By the time I turned fifteen, my mom was divorced again and had begun drinking quite heavily.

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

I was woken up at 4:00AM one morning by the police. They removed my mother and left all seven of us home alone. A social worker came to the house that evening and took five of us to stay (temporarily) with the Andersons, a family we knew who lived close by. My oldest brother was of legal age, so he went off and joined the Navy. My second oldest brother was taken in by one of his friend's parents. The rest of us stayed with a really nice couple, who wanted to keep all of us. However, there was an argument between our foster home and social services. In less than a month we were split up between two different homes.

This began the deepest sorry of my life. I had been separated from my baby sister for what seemed like forever. I missed her desperately.

Luckily, within a few months we were back with our mom. She was still drinking heavily. She would leave me home alone to watch my brothers every night and come back really late and very drunk. I warned her that if she continued to do this, I would report her to social services. That's what I finally did.

That move landed me in a very abusive foster home and left my other four siblings back at home with my mom. By this time I was almost seventeen and struggling in school. This is when I met a thirty-one-year-old man. He had previously been a police officer in the State Capitol. He helped me negotiate with social services to live on my own. I had a job and he proposed to me as soon as I was emancipated. As soon as I turned eighteen, we married and took in my four siblings who had remained with my mom. Within six months, we had the blessing of social services and became the official foster parents of my brothers and sister.

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

Unfortunately, my mom was able to convince a judge to get her kids back to her house. My new husband was a former police officer, so we had the sympathies of the local department. They explained that, legally, they had to return the kids to my mother. On a freezing cold night they did just that. However, when the kids all "ran away" a half hour later, the same police officers picked them up and brought them back to my husband and me.

It was incredibly comforting to know that the police and social services helped us keep my siblings from the alcoholic rages of my mother, even

when a judge couldn't solve that problem.

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 had the ability to talk my mom into seeing the reality that I saw from a very young age: that she was a drunk. I hoped that in helping her see it, maybe she would stop making such bad choices and stop drinking. Oh, how I tried!

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

My most precious ability is to love fully. I have a grasp on love that allows me to stay rational and negotiate to attain the best outcome in any situation. Through my three placements, I discovered that no two homes are alike. Yet, they all thought they were the best parents on the block. This led me to the discovery that there is always another way to solve a problem. I now have my own eighteen-year-old son. When I parent, I never give in or let destructive issues go unresolved. I just take a minute to calmly investigate with both the child and others involved, until I find the method that works.

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



Judge Orders CA to Boost Foster Payments

A federal judge has ordered California to increase payment rates immediately to thousands of foster parents, noting that it has been more than 2 1/2 years since he ruled that the state's reimbursement levels failed to cover the costs of raising a child.

State officials "have now had a full and fair opportunity to come into compliance with federal law. They have not done so," U.S. District Judge William Alsup of San Francisco said Friday.

He told the State Department of Social Services to raise its rates to levels specified in a UC Davis study of foster children's needs, which the state commissioned in response to the court case. For a child up to 4 years old, the reimbursement would increase to \$609 a month from \$446. Rates are higher for older children, and would climb to \$761 from \$627 for youths ages 15 to 19.

Payments would increase further each July to reflect rises in the cost of care.

Alsup said the higher payments could actually save the state money by encouraging more parents to provide foster care and reduce the need to send foster children to group homes at greater expense.

The state told counties Tuesday to begin the higher payments in July.

Foster parents care for 18,500 children in California who have been removed from their homes because their parents abused or neglected them or were unable to care for them.

The federal government pays half the cost and requires states to set rates that meet children's basic needs. Alsup ruled in October, 2008 that California's rates were too low to cover food, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies and other essentials.

The UC Davis study, completed in March, found that the state's rates have barely increased since 1991 and have fallen far behind parents' costs. Alsup said the Department of Social Services has taken no steps to comply with federal law and has instead argued that it needed legislative approval, which it has not yet obtained.

"Federal law ... does not bend to accommodate state law legislative hurdles," the judge said.

Christina Riehl, lawyer for the California State Foster Parent Association, said the ruling would benefit both foster parents and children, who have suffered from the state's delay.

Parents are "already donating their time to take care of foster youths," she said. "Now they don't have to take (money) out of their savings as well."

Reprinted from the San Francisco Chronicle, Bob Egelko, Chronicle Staff Writer
Wednesday, June 1, 2011

The Cake Project

by Jonathan Toste

Two Marin 8th graders, from The Marin Montessori School, have turned their love of baking into a love of giving. Emily Villavincencio and Olivia Thomas would like to donate two, superbly baked and decorated cakes per month to foster kids and others in need of love and appreciation. This gift is a direct result of the joy the two girls felt when they recently gave a cake to another teen in need of cheering up. The girls liked that feeling, so they decided to keep doing it.

I recently had the pleasure of enjoying one of the girls' cakes when they donated it to a young teen at the St. Vincent's School for Boys. When Emily and Olivia were asked to design the cake, the girls took the time to ask a few questions and research the recipe and decorations needed. In our case, we provided a favorite color, flavor and the interests of the cake's recipient. And what a stunner that cake was! The girls baked a fantastic chocolate cake with German coconut filling that was lavishly decorated with a painstaking Tibetan Mandala design in chocolate marzipan on top. They even included a yellow Sanskrit inscription of "Om Shanti" (the sacred sound of the universe or peace) that wrapped around the sides. Delicious!

Emily and Olivia's cakes are also available for purchase, and the girls are entering a few of their creations in this year's Marin County Fair. To order one for yourself, or request one of the two per month that are free to a foster child, contact Emily's mom, Heather at heathervilla@sbcglobal.net.



Way to go, Emily and Olivia!

MISSION STATEMENT/BYLAWS

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 Service's, 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.



Soup Group in July

Mimi Katz has graciously invited us to join her for another soup group on Friday, July 29th from 12-2PM.

You know she has an arsenal of fabulous recipes and absolutely nobody else is allowed to cook!

Bring the little ones, whiney babies and unruly teens, if you want to. Mimi can accommodate anything or anyone! This is not a potluck. There's no prep or cleaning allowed and everyone is welcome.

So, let's eat a meal together! See you there.

Issue 92 June 21, 2011

2011 MPFA Board Members

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Carol Ihlenburg
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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.

ESCRIP

It's Quick, Easy, and Costs Nothing To Help Support The Marin Foster Parent Association!



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Sign up with eScrip and you can earn up to \$150 annually for The Marin Foster Parent Association.

It's quick. It's easy. It's safe.

For those who don't know, eScrip is a fundraising group that works with local merchant partners, such as Safeway, and coordinates with them contribute a portion of what you spend in their store to MFPA.

Did you know that you can share your eScrip with up to three different organizations? Yes. You can support your child's school and have a portion contributed to MFPA.

The Marin Foster Parent Association

Sign up online

1. Go to www.escrip.com
2. Click on "sign-up"
3. Follow the instructions to register your grocery cards and your existing credit/debit cards.
4. Once you are registered, every time you shop at an eScrip merchant partner, a donation will be made to MFPA.

Don't wait! Visit www.escrip.com today and either enroll or reassign your contributions to include The Marin Foster Parent Association.

Transformative Parenting and Marin Waldorf School Present:



Raising Resilient Kids:

Helping Children Thrive in Stressful Times

An Evening with Developmental Psychologist
and Author Dr. Gordon Neufeld

How do we raise children who can bounce back from adversity, recover from trauma, and adapt to circumstances beyond their control? How do we prepare our children for the unknown? How do we equip them to deal with psychological injury, attachment loss, or simply not getting their way? While children have the potential for tremendous resilience, this attribute needs to be developed and parents are critical to this.

In this 2-hour evening address, world renowned Psychologist and author Gordon Neufeld (“Hold On to Your Kids”) will discuss the roots of resilience and provide insight on how this trait can be nurtured in children of all ages.

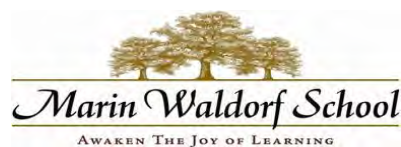
Thursday, September 15th, 2011. 7pm-9pm

Embassy Suites Hotel Marin

101 McInnis Parkway, San Rafael, CA 94903

\$25 in advance. For registration and more information, visit:

www.transformativeparenting.com



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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