



MARCH 2011 NEWSLETTER

Issue 89 March 21, 2011



March Meet & Eat Highlights - Jonathan Toste

Kids have so many questions as they grow up. The most important one of all may be "where do babies come from?" You probably have a question of your own: at what age is "the talk" necessary? We heard answers to both of these as well as a great deal of other pertinent information from Susan Quigley, Associate Executive Director of Huckleberry Youth Programs. Susan was kind enough to host our March Meet & Eat at the new Huckleberry Youth offices in Montecito Plaza (2nd floor, next to Trader Joe's in San Rafael).

In addition to explaining sexually transmitted diseases, Susan also explained that condoms are a MUST HAVE for every young adult out there. No ifs, ands or buts about it. Little known national statistic: Moms that talk about condoms, have kids who use them. So start talking! We also learned that perhaps the most effective way to reach your child regarding the "sex talk" is to keep the lines of communication open. The more you talk about sex, the easier it gets to discuss. Remember: all verbal age levels have questions about sex. Start these conversations early and find age appropriate language that makes your child comfortable with the topic. A comfortable child will absorb the information and process it as "standard operating procedure". The most important thing you can teach your child regarding sex, is the value of a healthy relationship. Tell your kids the value of trust and good judgement in their friendships and these will be more easily adapted to their intimate relationships. After all, love is the intersection of romance, trust and good judgment.

If all of this still leaves you somewhat squeamish, let your teens know that they can stop by Huckleberry's offices ANY Tuesday from 1PM to 5PM to get the real scoop (free) from the savvy young staff. If you would like more information or ideas about "having the talk", feel free to stop by yourself. Huckleberry Youth has a great collection of books on the topic.

Last, but not least, reflect on your own values and how you are role modeling them for your children. Become responsible and respectful together!

For April's Meet and Eat, we will be hosting Mark Wasacz and Ahtossa Fullerton from the law firm of Wasacz, Hilley & Fullerton. Mark and Ahtossa are the new attorneys representing many of the children in the Marin County dependency system. They will be discussing new laws, the dependency system and foster child legalities. See attached flyer for details.

Champagne & Chocolate Fundraiser

The Champagne & Chocolate Private Concert and Fundraiser was a huge success! We managed to raise a little over \$1000. We could not have done it without the amazing talent of The Rolling Strings (Liz Prior, Miriam Perkoff and Michael Grossman) and the wonderfully talented Kathryn Kanaya Quartet (Michael LaMacchia, John Hoy, Niels Myrner and Kathryn Kanaya). Thank you to all the musicians for their time and effort in making this such a wonderful evening. We would also like to take a moment to thank Jonathan Toste for providing such a beautiful venue by opening up his home to us. Of course, the event would not have been possible without the generous donations of our sponsors: Korbel, Barefoot Wine & Bubbly, Mollie Stone's, Champagne Bakery, Mill Valley Market, Teacake Bake Shop and Marin French Cheese.

Upcoming Events



March 25th: **Soup Group** San Rafael, 12PM-2PM

March 29th: **Seneca Center - Sustaining Families** San Rafael, 5:00-6:30PM

April 6th: **Advokids - Permanency Planning** San Rafael, 9AM-11:30AM

April 6th: **MFPA Meet & Eat** San Rafael 6:30PM-8:30PM

April 7th: **MFPA Board Meeting** San Rafael, 9:30-11:30AM

April 19th: **Seneca Center - Sustaining Families** San Rafael, 5:00-6:30PM

April 27th: **Quarterly Policy Meeting** San Rafael, 10:00AM-12:00PM

April 29th: **Ross Greene Presentation** St. Vincent's, 9:30AM-5PM

May 7th: **Marin Human Race** Marin Center Fairgrounds 7:00AM-11:30AM

May 24th: **Annual Meet and Greet** San Rafael, 4:00-5:30PM

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](http://www.mfpa.net).

**March is National Social Worker Month. Take a minute to thank your social workers for their kind, compassionate work in helping vulnerable 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](mailto: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

### **Marin Kids & Maternity Consignment Shop**

The MFPA would like to express its appreciation to Marin Kids and Maternity Consignment store in San Rafael. Last month, a foster parent needed clothing for two young children placed in her care with virtually nothing. A call to Marin Kids and Maternity Consignment from an MFPA representative yielded a bag of nice clothing for the children. Although this isn't an ongoing service, they are definitely supportive of foster families and help when they can. They offer a 10% discount to all foster families.

### **Marin Human Race**

It says "race" but this is really a fun, social event that we can all walk, run or stroll together. It's a great way to meet other foster parents, and kids 13 and under are free. There's also a nice fair assembled around the race, that's as informative as it is fun for all. We would love it if you could join us! See the flyer at the end of this newsletter to learn how!



### **Fire Squirrels 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 Squirrels was originally started by the

Novato Fire Department for CASA kids. Fire Squirrels 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 Squirrels 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.



### **Save the Date for the 9th Annual MFPA Picnic!**

Please join us for our 9th Annual MFPA Picnic on Friday, June 17th from 12:30PM-3:00PM at McInnis Park, in San Rafael. We'll have tons of great food and activities for all ages including the Dunk Tank, Bouncy House, Face Painting, Sack Races, and much more. We'll also be bringing back our successful "Donation Station" this year with some fun surprises. Our social worker friends will also

be there to help us kick off a great summer. We look forward to seeing you and your family there!

### **Help Needed!**

We need someone with website and Dreamweaver knowledge to help us get our website updated! Anyone interested or if you know anyone who could help us out, please contact Carol Ihlenburg at 507-1822 or [cihlenburg@comcast.net](mailto:cihlenburg@comcast.net).

### **Getting Cozy**

The MFPA has coats and pajamas from Sleep Train. If you need either for your foster child, call the MFPA hotline at 507-0557 or email [marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com](mailto:marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com).

### **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](mailto:jjtoste@gmail.com).

# Social Worker Profile

Social Worker Profiles is featured to help familiarize foster parents with the social workers they have or may work with. Anyone with a suggestion of a social worker to be interviewed can contact Annette Venables at [aagativen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:aagativen@sbcglobal.net).



**Social Worker:** Julie Lenhardt

**Position:** Social Services Supervisor, Intake/Hotline, Licensing CWS/CMS



**Why did you choose to work in the field of Social Work?** It was a bit of an accident. When I was in college, I studied forensic anthropology and loved it. At the same time, I was also working part time - first in group homes and later as the coordinator for the Independent Living Program for foster youth aging out of the Child Welfare System. I became infected by the work. However, I still swore that I wasn't going to be a social worker because, somewhere in my mind, I had the notion that I would become either a business woman or a scientist. In the end, I think my childhood, in which I was raised with foster children, is what truly infected me, and I felt drawn to social work, even when I tried different things. Doing this work makes me happy; I see so many opportunities for change and I meet so many families who inspire me. I feel very blessed to call myself a social worker.

**What is your background and history as a social worker? How long have you been doing this work?** I have been in social work in one way or another for sixteen years. I started in my early twenties, working in group homes until I had the opportunity to work for the Butte County Independent Living Program during my college years. After

college, I left social work for about six months to work in the corporate arena, but hated it and missed social work terribly. I applied to become a social worker for Butte County CFS and was hired in 1999. I worked there for over two years and absolutely loved it. I felt very inspired by the work and wanted to further my education. I left my hometown of Chico and moved to New York City in August of 2001 to begin a Master of Science at Columbia University. During my training, I spent quite a bit of time working for the New York State Psychiatric Institute, helping develop interventions to address the mass trauma caused by the terror attacks on September 11, 2001. I earned my master's in May of 2003 and moved to Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, I ran the Los Angeles County office of The Kinship Center, an organization devoted to special needs adoptions and education. My mentor was Sharon Kaplan Roszia, one of my professional idols and a leading authority on attachment and open adoption. Her knowledge and philosophies guide many of my daily decisions and my conversations with her never cease to inspire me. After living in LA for a few years, I relocated to the Bay Area and began working for Marin County, where I've now been for six years.

In addition to my work for the County, I really enjoy working as a trainer for the Bay Area Training Academy through San Francisco State University, and for the Center for Family Focused Practice through UC Davis, where I train professional child welfare workers and probation officers on both the technical tools we use in our field and on various practice techniques.

**What are the most rewarding and most challenging parts of your**

**work as a social worker?** I will answer this question from the point-of-view of a supervisor. In my current roles, the most rewarding part of my job is helping to orchestrate how social workers interact with families. Right now, we have an amazing group of workers who love their work, really care about children and families and are seriously talented. I get to be a participant, watching the work get done in a way that I am proud of.

The biggest challenge currently is our budget woes and the associated dwindling resources. We have lost positions and we have lost a great many community resources that supported our work - their pots are dry. As the money dries up, so do the resources that have been successfully stabilizing some of our higher risk families. Sadly, without ample community resources, we see both the frequency and the severity of child abuse increasing.

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

THANK YOU!!

Also, I am just beginning as a Licensing Supervisor, so please be patient with me as I learn this new role. It is very important to me to listen to and learn about your concerns and find ways to address them. It is also very important to me that you are given everything that we possibly can give to support you and your kids.



## **Ice Breakers** by Laura Estrada

Ice Breakers is a new program that Children and Family Services began implementing on February 28th.

It allows a child's parents to meet with their foster caregiver in the neutral environment provided by a trained facilitator.

The meetings are most effective when they occur early on in a child's placement in a new foster home.

Studies show that when parents and caregivers work together, the children have more stable foster home placements, experience better emotional development, are more successful in school, and return home sooner.



### **How does Ice Breakers benefit the children?**

The children benefit from the contact established between the

parents and caregivers. Studies show that when parents and caregivers exchange information about a child's needs, history and routine, the child will experience less anxiety about his/her out-of-home placement. It also fosters a feeling of trust when the child sees his/her parents and foster caregivers working together.

### **How does Ice Breakers benefit the parents?**

The parents benefit when they are able to meet the foster caregiver face-to-face by sharing what they feel are the important details about their child. By meeting the caregivers, parents also feel more confident about their child's safety and well being.

### **How do the caregivers benefit from these meetings?**

These meetings provide the caregivers with valuable information regarding the child in their care. Ice Breakers also gives the caregiver a

chance to describe themselves and their family traditions that will support the child in their care

### **Are there requirements for participation in the Ice Breakers program?**

Due to the relatively low number of removals in Marin County, Ice Breakers has established a yearlong pilot period. During this initial period, Ice Breakers will only be available to new removals. Once a child has had an Ice Breakers meeting, they will qualify for additional Ice Breaker meetings upon any placement changes or the transition back into their own home.

For further information regarding Ice Breakers, please contact the program supervisor, Bree Marchman, at (415) 473-7136



## **Nominations for the 2nd Annual Carol McKenna Award**

In honor of past Marin Foster Parent Association President, Carol McKenna, The 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 Unsung Hero 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.

The Marin Foster Parent Association will be accepting nominations through the end of April. The awards will be presented at the Meet and Greet on May 24th.

Foster Parents: If you've had the opportunity to work with a social worker you feel deserves to be recognized by receiving this award, please submit your nomination with a paragraph or two about why you feel he/she should receive this honor either via email at [marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com](mailto:marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com), fax at 472-2937, or regular mail at MFPA, PO Box 6726, San Rafael, CA 94903.

Social workers will be completing the same process to acknowledge a foster parent for this award as well.

All submissions must be received by April 30th.



# Chronicles of Adoption

Issue 89 March 21, 2011

By Jonathan Toste

Interviewee: Hillary Sloss

In a recent Bay Area Waldorf School teacher training session, 46 years into her adoption trauma, a single comment erupted into the totally spontaneous emotional release of hidden shame.



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

Not a lot. I know that I was born in San Francisco, in 1961, to an unwed Air Force servicewoman. Later, I discovered that my biological mother returned to her home state of Massachusetts directly following my birth. Sixteen years ago, at the age of 31, I did some research and was able to locate my biological mother. When I got in touch with her, she revealed almost nothing about my biological father and wanted to avoid direct contact with me herself. I made the bold move of going out to see her. When I showed up at her home, unannounced, she would not hug me or even let me into her home. But her eyes were most certainly the same as mine. I had found my creator. The only information she told me were that her parents were French, she was twenty six when she had me and she only knew my father for two days.

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

My adoption had been pre-planned and I went home with Mom on the day I was born. Off and on, I had "origin" yearnings as a child, but suppressed them. I knew my history would be inaccessible to me until my eighteenth birthday. It didn't really matter. I was too busy trying to be the "perfect little girl" so I wouldn't be "discarded" again. My Mom adopted my brother when he was

born, and I was three. We bonded quite well. He, however, chose the opposite approach than I had in regard to fitting into the family. He tested, or perhaps I should say "tortured", my Mom for major portions of his childhood and adolescence. Interestingly enough, he never had any desire to search out his biological parents.

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

Probably the most comforting thing I had growing up was that Mom never hid the fact from my brother or I that we were adopted. Significant to that was how she always said "I got so lucky to be able to be your Mom". This also gave me respect and sympathy for her infertility and how deeply sorrowful that was for her. The most comforting thing for me came about later in life. My biological mother passed away without ever having met any of my needs as her daughter, and her sister, my biological aunt, befriended me in a very deep and loving way. So much of my grief has been cleansed in the last few years because of this new relationship.

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

Well, I don't have a very deep answer to this question. I do remember believing, or at least hoping, that I was Swedish. As a child, I somehow had this thought that Swedish women were the most beautiful women in the world.

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

I am a successful photojournalist, which requires an ability to capture the deep, emotional secrets of my subjects. I think (because I have lived a life of deep emotions) that I possess the innate ability of pulling out those traits in others for my work.

However, I have lived the majority of my life within a kind of labyrinth in my mind. Unconsciously, I was playing hide-and-seek from my truncated biological and emotional history. A couple of years ago, while taking a Waldorf School class that discussed the differences between siblings, someone used the old cliché "you must have been the adopted one". Even though the comment was directed at someone else, it struck a chord - as this is how I was made fun of in school as a child. I raised my hand to point out the sensitivity issues to our teacher and all that came out were sobs and confusion. It took me completely by surprise. That one off-the-cuff remark had opened up a huge bottleneck of pent up emotion. When I finally regained my composure, I was only partially able to clarify to everyone in the room that we all need to realize that adoption is one of those subjects, such as religion and culture, that often deeply affect the emotional development of children.

*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](mailto: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.



### **EXPLOSIVE, NONCOMPLIANT, DISRUPTIVE, AGGRESSIVE KIDS**

**What Works, What Doesn't and How to Turn it Around**

**Featuring Ross W. Greene, Ph.D**

**St. Vincent's on April 29th, from 9:30AM-5PM**

**For more information or to reserve your spot, email:**

**[mchestnut@ccyo.org](mailto:mchestnut@ccyo.org)**

Issue 89 March 21, 2011

## 2011 MPFA Board Members

### Executive Board

**Linda Gregory, President**

479-8702, Grey\_gregory@att.net

**Jonathan Toste, Vice President/  
Phone Tree Chair**

258-9459, jjtoste@gmail.com

**Annette Venables, Secretary**

272-5187, aagativen@sbcglobal.net

**Carol Ihlenburg, Treasurer**

507-1822, cihlenburg@comcast.net



### Members At Large

**Mimi Katz**

492-0207

**Kathryn Jordan-Whittle**

898-5677,

kathryn@fishpondrecruiting.com

**Cesar Lagleva**

846-3789, giaclay@yahoo.com

**Pam Salvadore**

464-9668, psalvadore@me.com



### 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.



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



**Meet: Ahtossa Fullerton and Mark Wasacz**

## **ATTORNEYS REPRESENTING MARIN COUNTY FOSTER KIDS**

### **“New Laws, Legal Process and Foster Child Legalities”**

Wasacz, Hilley & Fullerton LLP is contracted with the Administrative Office of the Courts to represent the dependent children in Marin County. Mark Wasacz and Ahtossa Fullerton will be on hand to discuss the dependency process, the state of dependency in Marin County, and what foster parents should know about the dependency system to meet the needs of their charges. Combined, Mark and Ahtossa have been representing children and parents in the dependency system for over 17 years.

**WEDNESDAY, April 6, 2011**

**Dinner: 6:00 – 6:30pm ☺☺☺☺☺☺☺ Presentation: 6:30 – 8:30 pm\***

\*A social/dinner hour will be hosted at 6:00pm. To insure there is enough food and drinks available, please RSVP at 415-479-8702 by Monday April 4, if you are interested in attending this portion of the meeting.

**WHERE:** Marin Health and Wellness Center, Connections Center Building  
3240 Kerner Boulevard San Rafael

**QUESTIONS:** contact: Linda Gregory at 415-479-8702

Childcare will be available during the meeting (6:30-8:30PM). Those using the childcare provider will be responsible for compensating the provider and getting reimbursed by DHHS. (There will be reimbursement forms available!) Please RSVP at 415-479-8702 if you will need childcare with the number and ages of the children you will be bringing.

**\*Note: This meeting qualifies for required annual training hours for DHHS**

# Ready, Set, GO!!



## THE MFPA IS “RUNNING” THE MARIN HUMAN RACE AGAIN

**It says “race” but this is really a fun, social event that we can all walk, run or stroll together. It’s a great way to meet other foster parents, and kids 13 and under are free. There’s also a nice fair assembled around the race, that’s as informative as it is fun for all. We would love it if you could join us!**

**Registration is easy:**

1. Go to [www.marinhumanrace.org](http://www.marinhumanrace.org)
2. Click “Register Here”
3. Click “I Agree” to give your consent for participation
4. Click “Join a Team”
5. Click on “Marin Foster Parent Association”
6. Follow on-screen directions from there.

Now start asking your friends and family to sponsor you by sending them email invitations from within the website. You can also have them fill out the hard paper form and send it in to us at:

Marin Foster Parent Association  
PO Box 6726  
San Rafael, CA 94903

Questions?

Email us at:  
[Marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com](mailto:Marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com)

If you would rather not participate online, you can still join us. Call Pam at 464-9668 for a registration form. Then just fill it out, collect your donations and return them to our mailbox. No online activity needed.

# ESCRIP

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



&



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](http://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](http://www.escrip.com) today and either enroll or reassign your contributions to include The Marin Foster Parent Association.**

MARIN FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

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

(415) 507-0557

www.mfpa.net



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**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**

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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