



Fill the Ballot Box by Barbara Sabido

Voting for the MFPA Board of Directors is just around the corner! If you have been wondering how you can become more involved with the MFPA, here's your opportunity. Time commitment is as little as 3 hours monthly, and we take a summer recess. Board members choose what other projects they want to be involved with depending on their time and personal interests. You must have a current foster care license to serve as President or Vice-President. All Board Members must be members of the association.

The California State Foster Parent Association bylaws specify 2-year terms for officers, with President and Treasurer elected in even numbered years, and VP and Secretary in odd years. In order to bring our chapter into compliance, your vote will elect our President and Treasurer for a 1-year term, and Vice-President and Secretary for a 2-year term.

As of right now, the ballot looks like this:

- President - Linda Gregory Vice-President - Barbara Sabido
- Secretary - Annette Venables Treasurer - Your Name Here!

These folks would welcome some friendly competition! Send an email TODAY to marinfoosterparentassociation@yahoo.com to join the race! Ballots will be mailed out in early December, along with your 2012 membership form.

Meet & Eat Overview by Barbara Sabido and Diane Oser

November's Meet & Eat was an information buffet! Nita Lagleva-Gibson, Marin County Child & Family Services Public Health Nurse, arranged for two nursing students from SFSU to speak about Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus - aka MRSA. MRSA is a bacterial (staph) infection that is resistant to first-line antibiotic treatments. Two eye-opening facts: (1) while staph infections are a common infection of the skin and soft tissue and up to 30% of the population has a staph infection, MRSA is a specific, serious form of staph infection that is highly contagious, and (2) there are actually 2 types of MRSA, Healthcare Associated (HA) and Community Associated (CA). Foster parents and the children they care for are more likely to be affected by CA MRSA. *So who's at risk?* Athletes; children under 2; people in crowded conditions

such as shelters, prisons and childcare centers; drug users; military personnel; people with weakened immune systems; those who share personal care items. *So what does it look like?* Suspect MRSA when skin is red, swollen or painful, warm to the touch, full of pus or other drainage. MRSA often looks like a spider bite, and it can only be diagnosed by a doctor. In infants, MRSA is commonly found in the diaper area, and in children, especially those with eczema, frequent itching can increase risk. *So how do you get it?* Skin-to-skin contact, cuts or abrasions in skin, contaminated items and surfaces, poor hygiene and crowded living conditions. (continued on page 4)

Upcoming Events & Trainings

- November 26th: **Knitting Workshop** - Novato Teen Center, 12:00 - 3:00 PM
 - December 1st: **Relational Bullying - What It Is and How To Stop It** - MCOE, Community Room, 6:30 - 8:00 PM
 - December 3rd: **First Aid & CPR** - COM/ Indian Valley Campus, 9:00 - 4:00 PM
Call 415-883-2211 x8230 to sign up.
 - December 7th: **Annual CASA Holiday Party** - Strawberry Rec Center, Mill Valley, 6:00 - 8:00 PM (see flyer)
 - December 8th: **MFPA Board Meeting** - 555 Northgate Drive, San Rafael, 9:00 - 11:00 AM
 - December 9th: **Engaging and Supporting Teenagers** - Marin Justice Center, San Rafael, 11:00 - 12:30 PM
 - December 11th: **Marin Ballet's Nutcracker** - Marin Center, San Rafael, 1:00 PM OR 5:00 PM (more info in Noteworthy section)
 - December 18th: **MFPA Holiday Party** - Novato, 4:30 - 6:30 PM (see flyer)
 - January 24th: **Understanding Grief and Loss** - Marin Justice Center, San Rafael, 1:00 - 2:30 PM
 - January 26th: **MFPA CPK Fundraiser** - Corte Madera
- For more information on any event listed in this newsletter, contact MFPA at 507-0557 or visit our website at www.mfpa.net.



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



Noteworthy

Take Down the Help Wanted Sign

Thanks to a generous donation from Marin County Supervisor Steve Kinsey, the MFPA has hired our very first intern!



Welcome to Nancy Gordon, a former Marin County foster youth and current student at College of Marin, studying nursing. She is fluent in Spanish and

has worked with teenagers in a number of health-related areas, and has clerical and administrative experience.

"I am very excited to work with MFPA and help the organization achieve their mission. I hope that as part of the MFPA I can learn more about the foster care system so I can educate current foster care youth. Also, I hope this experience helps me grow as a professional and on a personal level. Thanks for giving me the opportunity of working for you. I will give the MFPA 100% of my dedication so that the mission of the organization is achieved."

A Tisket, A Tasket....

A Holiday Basket! Once again Mill Valley Middle School students and their families will be collecting donations and putting together holiday baskets for foster children. An email was sent out earlier this

month for requests for these baskets, which will be distributed the first weekend of December. The MFPA would like to thank MVMS students and their families for this wonderful contribution to our community.

Now THIS is Cool!!



A community volunteer has stepped forward to offer foster children in 5th grade and above a very unique opportunity. Kristin Cronnin is

dedicated to helping foster youth through her non-profit that teaches knitting as a constructive way to de-stress and develop a skill. The Novato Teen Center has partnered with Kristin to provide a space for her first Knitting Workshop on November 26th from 12-3 PM. Please email her at littleimprints2010@gmail.com to learn more and to sign up!

Time to Pop Some Corn!

Are you coming to CASA's annual Holiday Party on December 7th? Can you spare 30 minutes to man the popcorn machine or distribute donations? Time slots from 5:45 to 7:15 are open. Please contact MFPA at 507-0557 or drop us an email to sign up. Many hands make light work!

Grand Jete Your Way to the Nutcracker!

Each year Marin Ballet, together with their Nutcracker Sponsors, reach out into the North Bay community to give free tickets to residents who might not otherwise be able to enjoy the magic of Nutcracker season. The MFPA is pleased to be working with Marin Ballet again this year and invites you to come and see a wonderful production at the Marin Center on Sunday, December 11th at 1:00 pm or 5:00 pm. Please RSVP to (415) 507-0557 or email us at marinfosterparentassociation@yahoo.com no later than Wed., Nov. 30th with the number of tickets needed AND which performance you'd like to attend. Tickets are limited and will be distributed on a first come, first served basis. Keep in mind when counting heads that these tickets are intended for children who would not otherwise be able to attend such an event.

Fundraising in the New Year

Mark January 26, 2012 as MFPA's first fundraiser of the new year! We are repeating the fun of last year's CPK Fundraiser at their Corte Madera site. Don't miss it!



Licensing Corner

Fulfilling Annual Training Requirements

by Kathryn Nishimura

All licensed foster parents are required to complete 8-12 training hours annually.

Foster parents licensed at the basic level will need 8 hours of training per year. Foster parents licensed at any professional level will need 12 hours of training per year. The licensing worker assigned to each foster home will ask for verification of this training during the annual visit. The following is a list of ways to complete the training requirement, but is not meant to be exhaustive. If you have suggestions for ways to meet the training requirement that are not on this list, speak with your licensing worker.

- MFPA meetings which feature a presenter on a particular topic
- Any trainings offered by College of Marin Foster Care/Kinship Training
- College of Marin Classes on child development, etc.
- Jewish Community Center child development classes
- Parenting classes offered by multiple agencies
- Soup Group (1 hour per soup group with a maximum of 2 hours per year)
- Reading books on child development, parenting special needs children ,etc., with a minimum length of a one page write-up on what was learned from the book. You may read one book per year, which will count for 3 hours.

Please Note: First Aid/CPR classes do not count toward the annual requirement.



If there are two people on a license, both people must individually complete annual training hours.

If foster parents are unsure, they should verify with their licensing worker that the particular topic will count toward the annual hours before attending the training. In order to verify attendance, please use the Training Hours Verification Sheet which is available from your Licensing worker. The information needed is: Training Title; Date of Training; Number of Hours; Trainer Name; Organization providing the Training; Location and the Trainer's Signature.

It is the responsibility of the foster parent to have complete information for the trainings they've attended at the time of their Annual Review.

Quarterly Meeting Notes

by Barbara Sabido



MFPA Board Members meet with program managers and unit supervisors

from Children and Family Services on a quarterly basis to review policy and answer questions set forth by foster parents. In November's meeting, the following issues were addressed:

Is there funding for extracurricular activities, specifically sports? There are a number of funding streams to help offset costs of extracurricular activities for your foster child. Most are very specific about what type of activity the funds can be used for. Bottom Line: Always ask your social worker.

Licensed vs. Placement Ready? These terms are often used interchangeably but really do have different meanings. "Licensed" means your home has passed all licensing requirements (earthquake straps, safety gates, child-safety locks, etc),

while "placement ready" indicates that your home is licensed AND you have completed all certification requirements (Health Screening, CPR, First Aid, etc.).

Will attending a training before I receive my license count toward my annual requirement? Unfortunately no. The state starts "the clock" that governs this annual requirement at the time of licensing.

Retention of foster parents - Foster parents often become unhappy with decisions made for the children in their care. We are asked to advocate for them but, sadly, do not have the final say in their lives. The department completely understands and acknowledges this frustrating reality, and asks that foster parents in turn understand that social workers have to adhere to state regulations and that many decisions are just not negotiable. The key here: communicate, communicate, communicate. Call your social worker, then call the supervisor, then call the manager.

Holiday gifts - The department holds a toy drive and each social worker is responsible for distributing donations to the children in their case load. Foster parents should ensure that gifts are evenly distributed amongst their placements and are age-appropriate.

Please submit your questions for the next quarterly meeting (TBA) to Linda Gregory grey_gregory@att.net.

So Long, Farewell...

.... for a little while, anyway.

Julie Lenhardt, Intake and Licensing



Unit Supervisor, is leaving for a 3-year stint with the state. She will be working as the Probation Liaison to the state beginning in early 2012. Her replacement will be announced before the end of the year. We wish her much luck and ask her to please hurry back!

Meet & Eat Overview (continued from page 1)

So how do I care for it? Wash the wound, cover with a bandage, contact a healthcare professional, monitor your temperature, wash hands frequently (especially after touching the wound), change the bandage if it becomes wet, and don't attempt to drain the infection yourself; doing so could worsen or spread it to others.

So how do I prevent it? Good hygiene (wash those hands!), don't share personal care items (listen up college students!), be careful around open wounds, and keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.

Anything else? MRSA can live on a surface for up to 3 months, so clean your house regularly with products that disinfect. And pay close attention to frequently touched surfaces such as light switches and door knobs. The two nursing students who presented the training, Lacey Valenza and Cindy Franck, created a very informative PowerPoint presentation. They've given us permission to share the file so if you would like to receive it via email, please contact Barbara Sabido (barbarasabido@yahoo.com).

In addition to the MRSA training, Marin Foster Parent Diane Oser reported on the 35th Annual California State Foster Parent Association's

conference. Diane attended the conference and graciously accepted the challenge of speaking about her experience at our Meet & Eat AND writing an article about it.....



This year's annual conference was held in Ontario, California. A multitude of trainings were offered over a period of three days. "When You Believe, You Can Succeed!" was the theme. I enjoyed most of the workshops I attended and noticed a general theme of the foster parent being the person with the most healing power for the children in their care. In fact, presenter Patricia Coley-Foerch, LCSW is all for foster parents being included in therapy with their foster children. She talked at length about children making more progress when a loving adult is in the room supporting the child while the therapist is working with them. This can be done if the child agrees that the foster parent can be present, which bypasses all the confidentiality problems about the therapist talking to the foster parent about the child. Another speaker, Beverly Kyer, MSW, CSW, ACSW, The Kyer Group, presented 'Understanding and Supporting the Process of Grief and Loss in Children

and Youth". She wanted us to know how a child is devastated when taken away from what and who they know. A child experiences a loss when taken away from their parent, and they have the added shock of having no choice in what happens in the same way as a death in the family. The child needs to grieve, and it is the foster parent's job to most importantly listen and help them keep the idea of their parent close to them. Several other speakers also talked about giving children "Time In's" instead of "Time Out's." By sending them away we enforce their feelings of being unlovable. "Time Out's" work for children that know they are loved, but do not necessarily work with foster children.

There were many more great speakers who presented workshops and spoke at luncheons at the conference. The amount of information and experienced people to talk to was one of the highlights of the conference. I met many social workers and other foster parents, along with kinship parents, who were all there to acquire more information about how to love and help children. I encourage more foster parents and social workers from Marin County to attend next year.

Welcome Aboard New Foster Parents

by Cindy Wasserman, MSW

Marin County Children and Family Services extends a warm welcome to Shawn Yarnell and Steve Morrow, who were recently licensed for one child, ages one to six. They and their 10-year old son and



8-year old daughter will provide a loving, supportive and active home environment to a child in need. Steve is the owner of a television production and distribution company. Having worked in the fields of design and magazine publishing, Shawn is now a stay-at-home mother. Her interests include sculpting, hiking and reading. Steve enjoys mountain biking and tennis, and the children's interests include soccer, tae kwon do,

reading and ballet. This is a reliable, organized and warm family who will offer a great deal of comfort to children in foster care.

Did you know??? The Marin Foster Parent Association is now partnered with First Book. First Book is a national organization that is dedicated to providing quality books to low income children in an effort to foster the love of reading. One of the biggest services they offer is a marketplace with books at least 60% below retail cost. If you have been eyeing some special books or thinking about holiday gifts, email the book titles to Annette Venables (aagativen@sbcglobal.net), and she will let you know if we can order them for you at a discount.

Blue Ribbon Commission Highlights *by Carol Ihlenburg*

The Marin County Blue Ribbon Commission on Foster Care (BRC) met Monday, October 31st. The BRC was established in 2009 and focuses on identifying strengths and barriers to children in foster care. Those invited to attend the BRC meetings include social workers, foster parents, representatives for Marin Advocates For Children, attorneys for both children and parents in the juvenile dependency and delinquency systems and any other stakeholders who work in the juvenile court system. The commission is overseen by the current dependency court commissioner, Hon. Harvey Goldfine.

At last month's meeting, reports were provided from three different subcommittees that have been meeting over the last several months. One is working on establishing a Parent Partner Support Program (PPSP). This program would provide a team, including an attorney, social worker and parent partner, to families who are in danger of becoming involved in the dependency system. PPSP would assist the family in locating and utilizing services and resources in the hopes of avoiding becoming part of the dependency system. This program would operate out of the Legal Aid offices. The goal of this program is to help families avoid entering the dependency system.

The second subcommittee reported on the progress of establishing a Parent Mentor Program. This program would consist of parents who have successfully navigated the dependency system assisting families currently in the dependency system. The goal of this program is to avoid reentry of families into the system by providing a mentor to assist them on how to succeed in reunification. The hope is this program will be administered through Community Action Marin and funding will be obtained through the Marin Community Foundation.

The third subcommittee reported on the progress of revising the current Marin County Foster Care visitation guidelines. The current visitation guidelines were reviewed and revisions made in an attempt to provide the optimal visitation for children and their parents. The purpose of visitation is to reassure children that their parents are still part of their lives and to maintain the parent/child relationship.

If you are interested in attending the next BRC meeting, please call or email us to be informed when the next meeting will be held. No date/time has been set at this time.

Witnessing to a Child

by Cherry Jones, MFT

The power of being witnessed to is a profound gift in a relationship. Recognition, acknowledgement and encouragement is like gold (or a good fertilizer for growth!), compared to a lecture, advice or sympathy 'for what you must have gone through'. As an adult just take a moment and think about those most transformative times in your life where you have shared yourself - your depths - with another person or people who know you well, without judgment, just presence. It is often a still, silent experience for the listener, or a few reassuring sounds of acknowledgement, while you share your soul. What does that feel like to you? What does it feel like to be considered precious and contributing something important to the relationship and the world? So, let's talk about a relationship between a parent and a child and, in particular, a foster/adopt child. It is a parent/child relationship that provides security and safety no matter what occurs with the energetic push/pull of attachment. There is an immense transformative power in having a parent know you deep down and recognize your potential as a human being in the world even when you doubt yourself - even when you sometimes doubt your existence. There is a beauty in showing up for a child and expressing care for that child even when the child may try to sabotage the intimacy and closeness of the relationship because she is petrified of what dependency on, and closeness with, an adult might mean. Witnessing with understanding and without judgment is the beginning of changing a world view that may have been shaped by hurt and pain. Witnessing to a child is the beginning of helping that child be known from the inside out. And being truly known in another person's eyes is a powerful gift.

Cherry Jones is a therapist in private practice who works with foster/adopt families and is an adoptive parent herself.
www.cherryjonesmft.com.

Holiday Expectations

by Joan Roane, MFT

Our foster kids, and our adopted kids as well, often have very mixed and strong feelings about the holidays and celebrations many of us anticipate with joy. They may miss or feel guilty about their bioparent. They may not be used to the happy confusion that accompanies many families' special times. They may pretend to have happy feelings they don't have, or get unusually reactive, or withdraw physically or psychologically from the activities. Grief does that to you.

Sometimes foster parents indulge in a little "magical thinking" around special occasions, believing just a little that the gifts and festivities will fill that hole in the child that seems—and is—bottomless. When it doesn't work, *they* feel confused, disappointed, maybe even a little helpless or a little angry.

If you've had someone close leave, you may remember how hard it was that first birthday or holiday celebration without them. Everyone else seems to be "in the spirit" but you're not able to join in—or if you do, you feel guilty. I wasn't in foster care, but I well remember the Christmas after my parents separated. My mom tried her best to make it fun for us kids, and I, properly parentified, pretended to be excited for my little sisters. It would have helped if someone had said, "I know this must be hard for you."

As in other placement challenges, as the sage said, "forewarned is forearmed." If you're not surprised when your fost/adopt child is not the life of the party, or seems touchier than usual, or picks fights with the other kids, or kicks Santa in the shins, you'll understand that maybe this particular activity is too much to handle this time. And while you won't condone bad behavior, you'll be able to arrange a special moment of tenderness.

Donation Update

by Carol Ihlenburg

We have received new shoes and miscellaneous clothing from Sleep Train. In addition, we have a variety of infant and toddler clothing from Carters and Osh Kosh. Be sure to attend the annual CASA holiday party as we will have items there for foster children to choose from!



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 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.



November's Soup Group

The weather is certainly taking a turn toward Autumn so I decided to serve a thick, hearty and robust soup in a French Bread Bowl. I had cooked a Practice Turkey in preparation for Thanksgiving, so I boiled down the carcass, added lots of fresh wintery vegetables and real cream and produced a Cream of Turkey Soup deserving of the eclectic tastes of the awesome Foster Families of Marin County. And they came out in droves. I don't know if they were missing my fare, or the thought of soup on a cold and wet day got so many folks here, but we hardly had room at the table. Newcomers came, old-times mentored, and a few guests who want to volunteer with us all joined in. We planned the Christmas party because that party's host was in attendance. The soup was thick and creamy and I didn't apologize for using all fresh cream. We are the foster parents of Marin and we love to eat! Please join us at the end of January for another soup group and if it is still wintery, expect a rich and hearty fare, no potluck responsibilities, no clean-up help needed, all ages welcome, and if your mother in law is still visiting, bring her along. Warmly, Mimi Katz 492-0207.

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, gjaclay@yahoo.com

Barbara Sabido
barbarasabido@yahoo.com



Newsletter Crew

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

Carol, Linda and Barbara share the load of creating and preparing the newsletter for publication each month. Paula is the editor. Many thanks to Carol who flew solo on this task for quite a while!

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



Annual Holiday Party

**Marin Advocates for Children
Marin Foster Parent Association &
Marin County Health and Human Services**

Invite you and your CASA/Foster child to join us for food, friends, fun, gifts, crafts, photos, music, balloons and a visit from old Saint Nicholas.

**Wednesday, December 7th, 2011
6-8 PM – Strawberry Recreation Center
118 E. Strawberry, Mill Valley**

To be sure that no child is left out and that we have age appropriate gifts for your CASA/Foster child, please call with the age and gender of each child who will attend the party and the name of the adult(s) bringing the child.

Please R.S.V.P. by November 22 with the number of children and adults attending to Danyea Tylman, danyea@marinadvocates.org or call Danyea at 507-9016.

The Marin Foster Parent Association is Hosting a

Western Style Holiday Party



We are celebrating the holiday season on a ranch! A light dinner will be served with yummy desserts. Attendees will have an opportunity to feed and pet the horses who live there. Be prepared to get dirty—i.e. not the event to wear your best holiday attire to! There will be music for singing some holiday songs. Please join us for an afternoon of fun!



When: Sunday, December 18th

Where: 155 H Lane, Novato

Take Atherton exit, go approx. 1 mile East, Go Left on Bugeia, after .4 miles, take a hard right on H Lane. House is approx. 4th on right. It is a tan/white house (street number is difficult to see)

*Note: There are no street lights, so you may want to bring a flashlight!

Time: 4:30—6:30 PM

RSVP with age and gender of child/ren you'll be bringing by December 12th to insure no one goes hungry or without a special holiday gift.

507-0557

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