



September 2011 Newsletter

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THIS MONTH'S MEET AND EAT OVERVIEW

By Mimi Katz

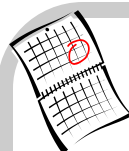
Yay, the kids are back in school, and our lives are becoming more predictable. Packing lunches and harvesting the last of the summer vegetables out of our gardens, we see the beginning of Halloween Advertisement and soon we will see Christmas decorations in the stores. I am so not ready for the holidays.

We had a wonderful Meet and Eat on Tuesday, September 13 at the Connection Center. Our speaker, Kathy Wosser Page, presented a very educational evening about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Often misdiagnosed, FASD can look like ADD, or ADHD, or bipolar disorder, attachment disorder, developmental delay, defiant behavior, and a host of other diagnoses that often are the result of FASD. The disorder is subtle to diagnose, and many professionals misdiagnose it, leaving children to struggle to fit in, adapt their behaviors, deal with rejection and low self-esteem, get left behind in school, overstimulated and

underachieving.

Kathy listed some of the "secondary diagnoses" that fall under the label of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder as Mental Illness, school dropout, trouble with the law, inappropriate sexual behavior, and inability to live independently as adults. She states that one in ten babies born in California in 1992 had alcohol or illegal drugs in their systems at birth, and this is not even including the possibility of exposure during the rest of the pregnancy. Kathy talked about ways to help children cope with their environment after it is understood that prenatal alcohol exposure is the cause of his/her unique behaviors. This includes keeping stress to a minimum, helping the child make decisions, make friends, avoid drugs and alcohol use and trouble with the law, and keeping their world organized and predictable. Keeping the kids supervised and the environment predictable will assist them in achieving these important goals. Make routines for the child to insure

security and open lines of honest communication. Keep things simple, as the FASD child is often immature and developmentally slower cognitively, although physically mature. She offered lots of suggestions and gave us a great reading list. She is also interested in helping start a support program in Marin for families who are interested and gave us her website address—www.fatcat.upweb.com. For more information contact Kathy Page at KathyP@canalalliance.org. Ms. Page is an active therapist doing Fetal Alcohol Teamwork, Consultation and Training. I was fascinated by her presentation and found insight into so many of the children I care for, probably misdiagnosed and misunderstood. I will rethink how I respond and not jump to diagnoses. I will look for the cues and clues that, maybe, the myriad of behaviors that I assumed a child was maliciously springing on me, are uncontrolled symptoms of prenatal exposures, and we may need to re-direct how we respond.



Upcoming Events

- ☺ **October 2:** *Race to Nowhere* film screening, San Rafael, 6:30 pm
- ☺ **October 5-7:** California State Foster Parent Association 35th Annual Training Conference, Ontario, CA
- ☺ **October 6:** MFPA Board meeting, San Rafael 9:30—11:00 am
- ☺ **October 11:** MFPA Meet and Eat, San Rafael, 6:30—8:30 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
- ☺ **October 28:** Soup Group, San Rafael, 12-2:30 pm

35th Annual CSFPA Training Conference

The California State Foster Parent Association, Inc. is hosting its 35th Annual Training Conference in Ontario, California October 5-7. If you have not received a registration brochure, you can register online at

www.cce.csus.edu/conferences/cdss/foster11. This is a 3 day conference offering a multitude of different topics and presentations including Attachment Issues in the Foster Home, Gang Awareness, Grief and Loss,

Mentor Homes, The Foster Parent as Healing Agent, Transracial Parenting, Understanding and Working With LGBTQ Youth and much more!

Licensing Corner

Pre-Placement Questionnaires For Foster Parents

We in the Licensing Unit want to take a moment to remind all foster parents to use the Pre-placement Questionnaire (State form LIC 9225) as a tool to learn about prospective and current foster children. Recent changes in legislation place the burden of asking questions specific to the needs of children on the foster parent. The state has

By Julie Lenhardt, Unit Supervisor

provided this form as a tool to remind you to ask such questions. The social worker may not have all the answers in the beginning, despite their attempts to attain the information, but the Department will continue to assess the child and pass information along to the foster parents. Foster parents also have a right to ask questions from the form when determining if a prospective placement is a good fit for their families. All foster parents should have received copies of the forms with the revised regulations last year. New foster parents are

also receiving them during the licensure process. Licensing social workers may ask to see the forms during annual reviews and can offer blank copies if you need them. They are also available on the CDWW web site, http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/FormsandPu_271.htm, under LIC form 9225.



Noteworthy

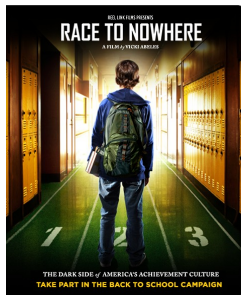


Ruth Rosen Fund—It's the time of year to start music lessons, art classes, dance training, theater participation! **The Arts Fund for Children** is here to

help with suggestions and tuition. Just email me at ruthrosen@lvha.net to ask for assistance; include what you are looking for for your child, his or her age and previous experience, if any, and your area of Marin. If you are still connected to a social worker, please give me his or her name and phone number. Remember, experience in the arts can give a child a stimulus to the imagination, discipline, a sense of accomplishment, and perhaps a life-long passion that will give their life a real focus! With the Arts Fund, give your child a chance to find out. Please put Arts Fund on the subject line of your email. Thank you. -Ruth Rosen

Race to Nowhere:

You are invited to a screening of *Race to Nowhere*. *Race to Nowhere* is a film about the achievement culture that is prevalent in affluent areas such as our own. The film is being shown as a community service and a parenting resource. It was created by a Bay Area mom, Vicki Abeles from Lafayette, who noticed adverse effects on her kids from over-scheduling and too much pressure to succeed, both in and out of the classroom. The film features Madeline Levine, local author of *The Price of Privilege*, as well as other experts examining the effects of pressure from the achievement culture on our kids. The film has been reviewed by the New York Times, the Washington Post,



the LA Times, and by our local IJ. The screening is at 6:30 pm on October 2 at BayMarin, 150 N San Pedro Rd., San Rafael. Tickets are \$10 online through the film's website or \$15 at the door. Profits go to scholarships for Marin County School District's Phoenix Academy. The *Race to Nowhere* website is <http://www.racetonowhere.com/screenings/bay-marin-community-church>

Job Opportunity:

Applications are being accepted 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 or (415) 507-1822.

Donation Update:

We still have school supplies available for foster youth—mainly binders, notebook paper, pens and backpacks. If your child could use any of these items, please contact Carol Ihlenburg.

Annual CASA Holiday Party:

Mark your calendars now for this year's annual CASA holiday party. It will be held Wednesday, December 7th at Strawberry Recreation Center from 6-8 PM. Not to be missed!



Don't Forget to Sign up For Escrip:

Escrip is a FREE way for you to support the MFPA. It takes a few minutes to sign up your grocery, credit and debit cards (at www.escrip.com) and that's it! Then, just shop as you do normally, and any business who is partnered with Escrip will automatically donate a percentage of your purchases. It is absolutely safe! Choose the Marin Foster Parent Association as an organization you support.



Chronicles of Adoption By Jonathan Toste

*Interviewer: Jonathan Toste
Interviewee: Chico Tassen*

What history do you know about your biological family?

I was born out of wedlock to my 14 year-old biological mother and into a Mexican migrant farm worker family in the Central Valley of California. Because of religious and ethnic issues regarding my bio-father, the family arranged for my adoption through my bio-mom's family church. Apparently my biological father was Afro-Cuban and from a family that belonged to a "cult", however he was never identified in any records. My bio-mom eventually left the area and I have been unable to trace any connection to her or her family. Since I am 6' 3" tall, I assume my biological parents were also very tall.

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

I was placed into foster care as an infant and adopted before I was a year old. I have no memories of any of that; however, I have always had a strong aversity to light when I am sleeping and attribute it to perhaps being raised for that early part of my infancy under constant light.

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

Since my parents were light skinned and of medium height, and I was taller than them when I was 11 years old, my parents never kept my adoption a secret. We were sort of forced into dealing with the constant disrespectful urge of people to say – "Is he yours?" We would make up absurd stories to shut people up, and laugh it up at their expense.

Another comfort came in the form of my folks being very involved in the peace and anti-war movements, working directly with people like Martin Luther King and Thich Nhat Hahn. I actually got to know Hahn at a young age and am mentioned in one of his very famous books. I even have my photograph with him in one book. Within this loving extended family, I waxed peaceful with everything in my life – including my heritage. I owe that serenity to my parents and their total inclusiveness of me into their life work.

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, there was the time I thought I was maybe the illegitimate son of Bob Marley or some famous basketball player – and that someday

they would locate me – it actually was more a scary "dream" than a solution, because I loved my adoptive parents and their platoons of gallant peace activist friends. I even got to visit Thich Nhat Hahn's "Peace Village" in France. That was all the fame and joy I have ever felt I needed in life.

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

I have an innate ability to accept that there is neither good nor bad – rather only the middle road of observing and learning to make choices toward less suffering. I am 26 years old now and following a monastic lifestyle in a large Buddhist community. I have a lovely woman in my life and am both a Buddhist teacher and student – which allow me to help others find the peaceful life I have been so lucky to have grown into. As a student, I constantly hone my desire to erase the barriers between the polarizing effects of religious intolerance, cultural stereotyping and other such blindness.

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



WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER!

The MFPA would like to give a warm welcome to Barbara Sabido who has joined our executive board as a member at large. Barbara is a home organizer and proprietor of Barbara's Room Rehab. Her ability to have a plan and seamlessly put things in order quickly and easily may come from being a wife, a mother of four boys, running her own business, and fostering infants -- all at the same time! With the help of her family, she has been collating our newsletter and plans to take a bigger role in its production. She will also be a key player in planning and organizing our distribution center.

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. 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.



Refurbished Computers For Foster Youth



Now launched, Get Connected!, the first nationwide refurbished computer program for foster care. Part of the global Microsoft Refurbisher Program, Get Connected! brings you IBM and Dell Internet-ready business laptops and desktops with new software (Microsoft Windows 7, Office) for \$120 to \$180. This includes shipping.

Shop online at: www.ifoster.org (you must be an iFoster member).

For orders larger than 10 computers, please email us at rcp@ifoster.org so that we can insure availability and save you dollars on shipping costs. New, these computers cost more than \$1,000. Thanks to Microsoft, iFoster members can get a refurbished, high quality business computer with replacement warranty for less than the cost of software.

Initial ordering has been fierce so shop now for best selection!

We've also paired our unique refurbished computer program with online training, self-help and tech support. Available 24/7, our new iLearn knowledge center has interactive trainings, videos and articles to help you with subjects such as Computer Basics, Using Microsoft Software, Internet Basics, and Best of the Web. Check us out at www.ifoster.org. Login using your username: (email address you registered for membership with) password: ifosterhero

Officers

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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:



“The Parent You Want To Be”

PRESENTED BY:

Todd Sarner, MA MFT

Are you struggling with your child/ren because he/she is:

- no longer responding to discipline methods that once worked?
- not listening to you or doing as you ask?
- having problems at school?
- aggressive- biting, hitting, yelling, or throwing tantrums?
- having a hard time being away from you?
- speaking to you in a disrespectful manner?

Todd Sarner is the Director of Transformative Parenting, an organization dedicated to helping parents be the parent they really want to be. Todd holds a Master's Degree in Counseling Psychology and has worked as a counselor and mentor to foster families and with at-risk teens living in group homes.

Using the practice of internationally recognized clinical and developmental psychologist Dr. Gordon Neufeld (“Hold On to Your Kids”), you will learn to apply remarkable attachment-based developmental work to help improve your relationship with your children.

WHEN

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 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 OCTOBER 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, October 10th; 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 to be removed from our mailing list.
You can also request an ecopy of the newsletter!