



Midwest Foster Care and  
Adoption Association  
3210 S Lee's Summit Rd  
Independence, MO 64055



NON-PROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 72  
LEE'S SUMMIT, MO

**NOTICE:** Be sure to look inside for our Newsletter-List Update Postcard... if you do not respond to this postcard, you will be removed from our mailing list.

Members will NOT be removed from the mailing list.

Thank you for helping us responsibly use our resources.



## Mark Your Calendars, and get ready for the 5th Annual Ribs for Kids Celebration!

Saturday/May 3, 2008

7:30a-6p at \*McGonigle's Market

It's almost that time of year again! Soon we'll be grilling on the porch and relaxing in our lawn chairs. Kick off the season at McGonigle's Market on May 3rd, with the best ribs you'll eat all year! Eat 'em hot, or take 'em home for later... however you get your ribs, you'll contribute to MFCAA, and the kids and families we serve. (\*McGonigle's: 1307 W 79th St)

This is MFCAA's BIGGEST FUNDRAISER. Last year, over 4,000 slabs of ribs were sold! Bring your friends, your family and yourself, and help us make 2008 another record breaking year!

Don't like ribs? Don't eat meat? Can't make it on the 3rd? You can still contribute to MFCAA's biggest fundraiser. Call or email Linda and find out how you can help. *Special Friends* donating \$200 or more are invited to our *Vision for Change* Celebration, hosted by McGonigle's and held at One Park Place (previously BMA Tower) overlooking Downtown K.C. **816-350-0215** or **Linda@mfcaa.org**

**Vision for Change  
Celebration  
One Park Place,  
Overlooking  
Downtown K.C.**



Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter

**From the Executive Director's Desk.....**

Dear Friends;

This month we want to take the time to reflect on MFCAA's First Quarter 2008 Accomplishments. We know that individually you benefit from any number of our programs and services. But an overall picture of what this organization does is a little harder to comprehend. We're proud of the amazing work that our staff is doing for our kids and families, and so this month we want to share some of that with you. ... CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

**MFCAA FIRST QUARTER  
2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

1. Advocacy
2. Training
3. Support Groups
4. Family Events
5. Respite Program
6. 2008 Conference
7. Lawyers for Kids



- From the Director—1, 6
- Mental Health Services—2
- Monthly Reminders  
& Calendar—3-4
- Response On Social  
Worker Retention—7

Remember that the MFCAA staff is here for you, every hour, every day, every week, all year long! Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have problems, questions or just want to find out more about what we do here.

lori@mfcaa.org  
816-350-0125  
www.mfcaa.org

**APRIL BONUS**

We find easy ways for you to **SAVE MONEY!**

Interested?

**Craigslist.com**

Craigslist.com is kind of like an online garage sale. People list their used items and you can buy them. Or you can list your items for other people to buy. You can also find jobs, research local services and more! You look by region, so the stuff you buy is usually just a short drive away (no shipping to pay!).

**BUY AND SAVE:** There are a variety of items and prices, from old to new and from cheap to expensive. Almost all of it is used and priced accordingly, so you're getting a deal no matter what. We saw a sofa and loveseat for \$50!

**SELL AND EARN:** You can also list stuff you want to sell. This is a great option if you have one or two things that don't fill a garage sale, or don't want to spend the money advertising in the newspaper... did we mention that it is FREE to post?



## Prior Authorization for Mental Health Services for Foster Children

UPDATE: MFCAA began collecting data on problems experienced by families and providers as the Prior Authorization process has been implemented. Since January, the following concerns have been noted:

- Unclear written policy on prior authorizations and limited acceptance of various diagnostic codes for approval for treatment.
- Difficulty accessing the approval folks at Mo Healthnet. It is reported that the fax machine line is busy and turned off all weekend.
- Excessive and time-consuming documentation requirements in order to attempt to obtain authorizations. Requirements are reported to be far in excess of requirements for traditional insurance plans.
- Lack of access to Children's Division Children's Treatment Services funding to cover needed services which are not approved by Mo Healthnet.
- Multiple requests for approval for treatment have been approved for numbers of sessions which are far less than requested because the requests are perceived as deficient by the Mo Healthnet staff.
- Therapists express concern that because limited diagnostic codes are acceptable (for example 'sexual abuse of a child' is not accepted) the need to change diagnosis to qualify for treatment is unethical and inappropriate.
- Comments on denials indicate that therapists are expected to provide case management services including identifying community resources to serve the children they are working with.
- Significant family therapy restrictions seem to indicate that there is a lack of understanding within Mo Healthnet of the very unique needs of foster children in general and the role of multiple families in the lives of these kids. Treatment is provided with the birth parent or the foster parent, not both.
- Lack of access to sibling therapy for separated siblings indicates another lack of understanding within Mo Healthnet of the needs of separated siblings and the importance of resolving issues to provide the potential for sibling reunification.
- As a result of all of the above, foster parents are reporting lack of access to supportive therapy services they need to maintain difficult children in their homes.

As a result of all of the above, therapists are opting to limit or refuse clients who are Missouri foster children. Therapists available to treat these kids are becoming significantly harder to find.

MFCAA continues to work with the Children's Division, Mo Healthnet and the Missouri legislature to seek a solution to this mental health crisis for Missouri's foster children. If you have stories you'd like to add to the growing list of concerns, please call Lori at 816-350-0215, or email [Lori@mfcaa.org](mailto:Lori@mfcaa.org).

"When reimbursement rates don't reflect  
the **real expenses**

that foster parents face,  
it's the **children who suffer.**"


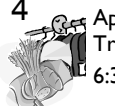



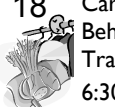




- Karen Jorgensen, Executive Director of the NFPA.



**JOIN TOGETHER  
TO RALLY FOR  
FOSTER AND ADOPTED  
CHILDREN**

**WHEN:** 4.14.08/10 a.m.

**WHERE:** Jefferson City/  
Rotunda in Capitol Building

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	March 31	1 	2	3	4 April Training 6:30p 	5
6	7	8 	9	10	11 	12
13	14	15 	16	17	18 Career? Behavioral Training 6:30p 	19
20	21	22 	23	24	25 	26 Kids & Judges Day -contact us at 816-350-0215
27	28	29 	30	27	28 	29
30	31			Looking Forward... May is Child Abuse Prevention Month. What can you do to raise awareness?		

**Don't Forget...**



As we head into the spring months and your foster or adoptive kids, or biological kids living in a foster or adoptive family, start dreaming about playing Little League, starting karate or joining Girl Scouts, remember our program,

**Lawyers for Kids**

This program grants wishes for children 3 yrs-19 yrs old, living in a confirmed foster, adoptive or kinship home. Wishes that promote skill development or leadership will be given first priority.

Visit [mfcaa.org/Lawyersforkids.htm](http://mfcaa.org/Lawyersforkids.htm) to fill out an application -OR-

Call or email Suzen at 816-350-0215/suzen@mfcaa.org

**Update...**

**SKATE PARTY FUN FOR ALL!**

Thanks to all the families who braved the crowds to attend MFCAA's skating party on March 15th. The kids had a blast skating, and parents had fun dodging all the kids crashing around them! Watch upcoming newsletters for information about MFCAA's summer family event. -Suzen Ruis



**PROM BOUTIQUE IS BIG SUCCESS!**

The prom boutique was a success! We had approximately 75 girls participate and they all found beautiful dresses, shoes and jewelry. Stylists were on hand giving hairstyling and makeup tips. It was a lot of fun. -Becky Hughes

Dozens of generous ladies donated dresses, and we were hoping to have even more girls take advantage of our prom boutique. We still have the dresses, and **your daughters can still get a prom dress if they missed the boutique.** Cal or email Becky at [becky@mfcaa.org](mailto:becky@mfcaa.org) to set up an appointment to look at the dresses.

# Monthly Reminders



Foster Parents are required to maintain a certain number of training hours in order to keep their licenses, and ALL parents can use additional tools to care for the children in their homes. MFCAA provides two great resources for “parent training.”

## Resource Library

MFCAA has a lending library with video tapes, dvd’s, cd’s and books that can be checked out and used for outside training hours. Call Tammy at 816-350-0215.

## On-site Training

April 4: **Monthly Training / Bullying**, with speaker Kealey Williams/MFCAA @ 6:30p - Many kids are impacted by bullying in many aspects of their life experience. This course will focus on how parents can help a child who is being bullied and what to do with a child who is a bully to others.

April 18: **Career Behavioral Training** (dinner at 6:30p/training at 7p... please RSVP to tammy@mfcaa or call 816-350-0215 for dinner)/ *Transitions*—Helping children and parents transition more effectively.

May 2: There is no monthly training in May, but all of you who are Foster Parents should plan to attend our Foster Parent Appreciation Activity, at MFCAA! Look for more info in email alerts and online.

## Clothes Closet

*April means Spring Cleaning*, and that applies to your closet! Lots of foster and adopted kids need summer clothing items, so send your kids into their rooms and tell them not to come out until they’ve made room for their new summer clothes! Then bring them to MFCAA any time you’re headed our way, and someone else will have new clothes too!

MFCAA’s clothing closet provides clothing, shoes, coats, toys, high chairs, car seats and more to our members. Clothing closet hours are from 10 AM to 2 PM on Tuesdays & Fridays.



## Host Your Own Fundraiser

Everyone’s feeling a little bit of the economy crunch, but YOU don’t have to have extra money to DONATE to MFCAA. Get a group together and hold a carwash, bake sale, pancake breakfast, group garage sale... anything you can have fun with, in honor of Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association. Raise \$50 or \$500. We promise to make every dollar count in the life of a child and his or her family.

## Food Pantry– Host a Food Drive!

*Looking for a group project?* **Help us stock our shelves... they are getting bare!** It doesn’t have to be November or December for you to make a big difference with a small food drive! Put a box out at church, knock on a few neighbors’ doors or have each member of your club bring in a few items. We’ll take it all... fruit, vegetables, peanut butter, hot cereal, pasta and rice are very popular.

Our food pantry is available weekly on Tuesdays and Fridays for picking up bread and other special items. Members are allowed to have a food pantry appointment to obtain canned goods, cereals, hygiene items, frozen goods and other food items once each month. To schedule an appointment, or for information on donating to the Food Pantry, contact Becky at becky@mfcaa.org or 816-350-0215.



**TAX REFUND  
WEIGHING  
YOU DOWN?**



TAX TIME for many MFCAA families and friends brings refunds... and this year, the tax credit means everyone is getting something back. If you've benefited from an adoption tax credit, or you haven't made plans for the money you'll be getting back in May, please consider remembering MFCAA with a donation.

What you donate to MFCAA will bring you more than just a good deduction for next year!!



Don't forget about our **Respite Referral Program!** If you need respite care or are interested in becoming a provider, please call Suzen at (816) 350-0215 or e-mail [suzen@mfcaa.org](mailto:suzen@mfcaa.org).

**PLEASE NOTE:** In our effort to responsibly use resources, we have included address update postcards\* in this newsletter, and request that those who would like to stay on our mailing list respond to the postcard. If you do not respond to this postcard, you will be removed from our mailing list.

\* MFCAA *Members* should not receive the postcard, and will NOT be removed from the mailing list.

**In Memorium**

The families, staff and board of MFCAA would like to send out condolences to the family of Mr. C. Curtis Watkins. Mr. Watkins was a long time friend and supporter of MFCAA.

We would also like to give a special thanks to all those who chose to remember our good friend through their kind and generous donations to MFCAA.

- |                           |                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Margaret Shouse           | Caroline & Robert McKnight        |
| Frank & Margaret Zim      | Charles Breusing                  |
| Michael & Myrtia Mardikes | Barbara Jaffe                     |
| Dale & Patricia Hotze     | Elizabeth Smartwood               |
| James & Kathryn Mitchell  | Julie Walker-Browne & Pete Browne |
| Toni Watkins              | Rev. & Mrs. William Watkins       |
| James & Nancy Carnes      | Michael & Sally Pollock           |
| Ann Howie                 | Joan & Sam Stockdale              |
| Nancy Cooper              | Joanne & Bill Phelps              |
| Heather Paxton            | Mr. & Mrs. W.P. Salisbury         |
| Garnet Hood               | Kissick Construction Company      |

**Special Thanks**



A local group from William Jewel gathered special items and put together over 600 Easter Baskets for our foster and adoptive families.

The group dropped the baskets off on Friday, April 14th, then returned the next day to hand them out.

**Foster and adoptive families rally in Jefferson City:**

April 14th. 10a. Jefferson City

The Governor recommended a \$2.5 million rate increase. Together, let's encourage the General Assembly to "hit the MARC" with a \$10 million rate increase.

Buses and Carpools are being organized by:

**St. Louis Area:** Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition

800.FOSTER.3/3 | 4.FOSTER.3/www.foster-adopt.org

**Mid-Missouri Area:** Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association

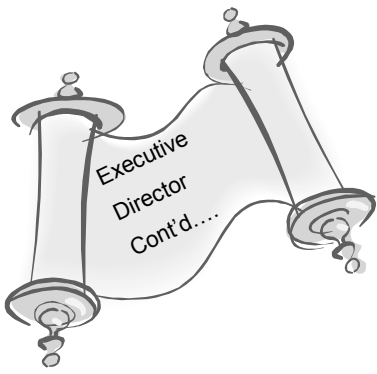
417.538.4362

**Kansas City Area:** Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association

816.350.0215/ www.mfcaa.org

\*Signs will be provided.





**Training this quarter:** 3 First Friday Support/Training Sessions were provided to an average of 45 Parents per session. CPR training was provided to 30 Parents. Career/Behavioral Training was offered in 6 sessions to an average of 15 parents per session. Additionally our first training offered to youth, "Job Skills Training for Teens" was provided to 20 teenagers. Other trainings for youth are scheduled in the next few months.

**Groups this quarter:** Abuse Reactive Group 1 was completed with six girls successfully served. Group 2 girls, and a new Group 1 girls and Group 1 boys will begin this month. Post adoptive groups scheduled to begin this month will serve an additional 30+ children/parents.

**Clothes Closet this quarter:** The clothes closet has served more than 140 families this quarter and benefited from a large collaborative garage sale in terms of both a cash donation and the donation of very nice unsold merchandise (children's clothes). This sale also drew media attention to the families of MFCAA.

**Food Pantry this quarter:** The food pantry has served more than 330 families this quarter. Currently, the number of kids served by the food pantry and clothes closet is more than 1,025.

Additionally, for the first time ever, MFCAA gave away **Easter Baskets** this year (thanks to the generosity of some very enthusiastic William Jewell College students) to more than 300 children and 100 families.

**Family Events:** MFCAA hosted its first ever family fun event, a St. Patrick's weekend skating party. Hundreds of kids overwhelmed the roller rink to its capacity and beyond. A second event (Cook-out and pool party) is being planned for June. Watch this newsletter for more information!

**Lawyers for Kids:** We've processed fifteen kids' requests for assistance this quarter. Wishes granted included soccer, karate, dance, pom and cheer, and t-ball registration fees.

**The Respite Program:** Six respite provider families have been added to the existing respite referral list. Letters seeking church involvement have been sent to 40 area churches identified as having an interest in foster/adoption ministries. Packets were created for churches interested in hosting family nights out (large respite evenings). To date, 46 units of respite have been provided through our respite referral program.

**Conference Planning:** Planning for this year's conference is well underway. This year's conference will be the first conference collaboration between MFCAA and UMKC School of Social Work. The conference theme will be "Integrate, Innovate, Collaborate: Services for children with many families". The conference will be earlier this year with a target date in October. Expect conference details in the May or June MFCAA newsletter.

**Individual Advocacy:** More than 102 families (accounting for more than 300 children) have been served with individual advocacy assistance ranging from referrals to resources for help with adoptions, help with taxes, and therapy services to emailing on behalf of parents or personally attending and participating in meetings/hearings with foster/adoptive parents and their licensing/child placing agencies. This assistance has secured desperately needed services for children, allowed children to be adopted by loving permanent families, and prevented adoption and foster care placement disruptions.

**Systemic Advocacy:** MFCAA staff has presented workshops to local and national audiences, including the Child Welfare League of America conference in Washington DC. MFCAA staff members participate in several child welfare related task forces and boards, and serve on several Children's Division internal committees working to solve problems for kids within the system. MFCAA continues to collaborate with Cornerstones of Care on various services for children in foster care, and has increased services to adopted children through the contract with LINC to serve as the Western Missouri Adoptive Resource Center. MFCAA staff work both locally and at the state level to improve policy and seek legislative solutions to problems facing foster and adoptive parents (many of which are described in other articles within this newsletter on an ongoing basis).

MFCAA staff love their jobs as they have the privilege of making a very real positive difference in people's lives each and every day. We bring into this work the core belief that the work done by the loving and committed foster and adoptive parents of Missouri is among the most valuable work that any human being can undertake. Supporting you in that work is our mission and our pleasure. Please remember that when you have a question, when you have a crisis, or when you just want to hang out with people who live lives similar to yours, MFCAA is here for you. As you can see this month we're proud of what we do, but mostly we're proud of what you do, each and every day, to make a difference in the lives of kids.

*Lori Ross*, MFCAA Executive Director

## Food Pantry Grant

Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association would like to give a strong and heartfelt thank you to the **Independence Junior Service League** for its grant in support of our *Food Pantry* project. Through this project MFCAA will be able to increase its support of foster and adoptive families providing children the safe nurturing homes they deserve.

Virginia Lewis-Brunk, Regional Director of the Jackson County Children's Division, took the time to write a wonderful response to Lori Ross' March *From the Executive Director* letter. We've included Ms. Lewis-Brunk's letter below, so that you all have the opportunity to see how Social Worker Retention issues are being addressed:

Dear Lori,

I wanted to take a minute to respond to your letter in the March 2008 MFCAA newsletter. As I have done on rare occasions in the past, I am hopeful that MFCAA will find the space to print this in an upcoming edition of your newsletter. First and foremost, thank you for recognizing that March is National Social Work Appreciation Month. We in Jackson County are delighted to use this month each year to recognize the work of our staff. The fact that you took the time to address this and encourage your families to recognize their workers is truly appreciated.

As your letter dealt with staff retention, I wanted to share a few things that we do in Jackson County to address staff retention. As your letter indicates, staff retention is critical to the direction of a case. As with foster placements, the more stability we have with workers, the more likely permanency can be achieved timely. This starts with quality recruitment. To that end, the Jackson County office has dedicated specific staff to the task of staff recruitment and retention. In addition, we are committed to interviewing and hiring new staff on a monthly basis. Recruitment efforts are varied and expanding as new research highlights effective recruitment tools.

In regards to staff retention, Jackson County employs the following activities:

- formal employee of the month and employee of the quarter programs
- informal recognitions at office meetings
- regular brown bag lunches with administration
- formal staff mentor programs
- exit interviews
- increase access to resources through databases and resource fairs
- learning circles
- appreciation events

Retention efforts are also being enhanced at a statewide level. As part of our Program Improvement Plan, a statewide supervisory workgroup was established 3 years ago. Through those efforts, enhancements have been made to the quality of supervision provided to front line staff. Clinical supervision training for supervisors has been implemented, as well as expectations for weekly supervisor/worker conferences. Assessments of front line supervisor duties have been conducted and adjustments have been made where possible.

In addition, changes are underway regarding how potential applicants are selected for employment. The Division plans to create an on the job video for all potential applicants to view. This should give them an idea of what to expect in the public child welfare field and increase their knowledge of whether or not employment with us is a good fit. There will also be a self assessment piece to this process.

For the past several years, the Division has participated in a Survey of Organizational Excellence (SOE). This tool allows staff to give anonymous feedback on different categories of their work and their work environment. These results are tabulated by an outside entity and provided to the Division. Enhancements to our programs and environment are made as those results are reviewed.

Lori -- I again want to thank you for your time in addressing staff retention. As with Resource Family retention, this is an important issue and I am truly grateful to have community partners willing to help us in this endeavor.

Sincerely,  
Virginia Lewis-Brunk, MSW  
Regional Director, Jackson County Children's Division  
816/889-2815

## MFCAA CONTACT & DIRECTIONS:

From I-70, take the Lee's Summit Rd Exit and go North, drive for about a mile, and we are located on the West side of the road (across from a park, just before 32nd), on the Drumm Farm campus. We are part of a collection of "houses" set back from the road. Stay to the right of the drive; MFCAA is the second building on the right.

### Address:

3210 S  
Lee's Summit Rd

Independence, MO  
64055

### Main Phone:

816-350-0215

### Website:

[www.mfcaa.org](http://www.mfcaa.org)

