



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

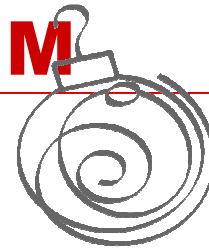


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INDEP, MO
PERMIT NO. 535

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

FINAL DETAILS FOR FAMILIES

Important: If you have turned in your forms, and have not received a confirmation postcard from us, **CALL US TO MAKE SURE WE HAVE YOUR INFO (816-350-0215).**



GIFT PICK UP TIMES -

- Dec. 15th & 16th
- 10a-4p...We can stay until 6p on either of these days, if you **CALL US BEFORE DEC. 11TH.**

PICK UP LOCATION –UPDATED

Storage Facility at 1500 West Geospace Dr (Independence)

Directions: I-70, to 291 North to:

- >Independence Ave (turn Right/East)... this road is about 4 miles past the I-70, 291 Interchange
- >Follow Independence Ave toward the big blue sign, and go Left at the sign (into the East/West "tunnel")
- >You will follow the drive into the "tunnel"/underground and follow the One Way signs (the signs will lead you to the right)
- >Several yards after the first One Way sign, you will see a loading dock on the right (the loading dock is about .2 miles past the big blue sign)
- >You will pull up to the loading dock to get your gifts. If the dock area is full, you can park in the spots beginning directly to your right after you go right at the One Way signs.

*The Warehouse does not have phone reception, **so please call with questions prior to Dec. 11th.** A staff member will remain at MFC&A to answer phones on the 15h & 16th, but she may not be able to get messages to us until late in the afternoon/evening.

MFC@AAA

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



Letter From the Executive Director

Dear Friends;

As the Holidays approach, the large and boisterous Ross family slips into the nostalgic family mode, just like most of the rest of you. We find the boxes where we've stored our ornaments and lights, we dust off our fake Christmas tree, and we start dreaming about holiday food, and relatives we haven't seen in a long time. I spend a great deal of time chronicling the activities of all of the members of our family in our annual family Holiday newsletter (our version of a Christmas letter), and my kids spend a lot of time critiquing which picture I've selected or groaning over which story I've told. *continued pg. 3*

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FOR YOUR HIGH SCHOOL KIDS: HOW TO GO TO COLLEGE

Are you one of those kids who wants to go to college, but you're not quite sure just how to make that happen? Well, here's a checklist of things you need to do that will help you accomplish your goal of going to college (written by Barbara Rupp, Director of Admissions/University of Missouri-Columbia).

What courses are you taking in high school? Are you taking courses that will help better prepare you to get into college and to do well in college? Don't take the easy way out, and don't let anyone talk you into taking the easy way out. You need to take solid courses, including strong math classes. Many colleges require specific courses to be completed at the high school level.

Have you taken the ACT exam yet? If not, sign up to take it as soon as possible. If you already took it, how did you do on each of the 4 sections, and what was your overall score? If you've only taken the test once, it is probably smart to try to study for it and to take the exam at least once more. There are ACT study guides available in public libraries, and probably in your high school library.

Have you visited a college yet? Colleges love to have students come for a visit, though you usually need to make an appointment to do so. Visiting a college is a good way to find out exactly what they require for admission, what kinds of services they offer, and how you feel you would fit in there. You can usually make your appointment by telephone or by going to the college website and registering on-line.

Have you looked at different college websites? This is another great way to "visit" a college, though we still recommend you do so in person at some point. The college website will almost always tell you what is required for admission.

If you are a senior in high school, have you applied to any college? Remember, you can't be admitted to a college if you don't apply there! Also, many colleges will waive their application fee if your circumstances make it difficult for you to pay the fee. Check with the college or with your high school guidance counselor.

Not sure you're ready for college? If you need to improve your grades, want to "try" college out before moving far away and declaring a major, need to live close to (or at) home for a while to save money, or just aren't ready for college for any reason, two-year schools are a great alternative. You can always transfer to a four-year university when you're ready. Check out local community colleges.

These are just a few of the basic steps needed to follow to give yourself the opportunity to go to college. None of them are impossible, but all require you to make things happen for yourself. You can do it. Go for it.

COLLEGE PREP CLASS: We will hold a college prep class for all of the kids in your family (foster/adoptive/biological), in Feb. This class will cover the how/why/when/where of applying for college, including entrance tests, financing and the application process, and is appropriate for Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors. Check the January newsletter for a final date and time. We'd love for parents to attend with their kids.

NEW JACKSON COUNTY

FOSTER PARENTS

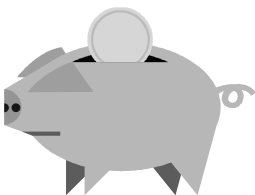
MFCAA would like to extend a special invitation to Jackson County foster families that have been licensed for 5 years or less (license was obtained between Jan. 2004 and Oct. 2008) to participate in our Strengthening Families pilot program.

This program is launching in an effort to provide comprehensive and easily accessible support to relatively new Foster and Adoptive families. Our goal is to assist your family in your journey through foster care and adoption, and to help you to develop the base of knowledge and skills that will equip you to care for foster and adoptive children for as long as possible.

We know that skilled and stable foster and adoptive families are the key to successful outcomes for abused and neglected kids, and we believe that you must be as prepared and supported as you can be.

**Please join us at an information meeting:
Dec. 11th @ 6:15 p
MFCAA in the Dining Hall (left of the drive—
2nd building)**

RSVP (or for more information) to Shandra:
816-350-0215 or shandra@mfcaa.org



IRA Charitable Rollover Benefits Available for 2008

Those over age 70 ½ who want to support Midwest Foster Care and Adoption

Association can now make a direct transfer from their IRA to MFCAA and receive tax benefits. Congress extended the IRA charitable rollover as part of its economic bailout legislation in early October. The rollover allows a direct transfer to MFCAA of up to \$100,000 a year tax free in 2008 and 2009.

Here is how the legislation helps save taxes:

- A rollover gift from an IRA will not be included in taxable income.
- A rollover contribution qualifies for the required annual minimum distribution, which can result in a lower taxable income.

The IRA custodian must transfer funds directly from the IRA to Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association. If the IRA owner withdraws the funds and then contributes to MFCAA, the withdrawal will be included in gross income. Please contact the IRA plan custodian or trustee before making a charitable withdrawal.

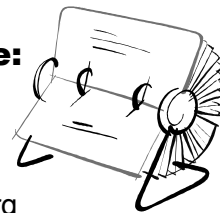
MFCAA CONTACT & DIRECTIONS:

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



We still need donors to adopt families for

Christmas. If you can adopt a family, or even just 1 child, please call us as soon as possible at 816-350-0215, or sign up online (mfcaa.org—right side of page, click on Donors).

You can also help our Adopt-A-Family Program by purchasing commonly requested items. We can use these items to fill in where needed when distributing the gifts to each family. Just drop them by MFCAA any time before Dec. 11th.

Sheets-Twin
Comforter-Twin
Bed Pillows/Pillow Cases
Bath Towels-Neutral
Kitchen Towels-Neutral
Toilet Paper
Paper Towels
Batteries-AA & AAA
Pots & Pans
Cooking Dishes
Cooking Utensils
Dishes
Silverware
Family Games

Hoodies (adult sizes)
Coats (adult sizes)
Legos
Transformers
Portable CD Players
MP3 Players (inexpensive)
Sports Equipment
CD's/Music
Hannah Montana Stuff
High School Musical Stuff
Littlest Pet Shop Toys
Barbies & Dolls
Drawing & Crafts Supplies
Books & Activity Books



This Christmas, don't forget to GoodShop...

you can shop at lots of different online stores (amazon.com, Sears, Barnes&Noble, Home Depot, Old Navy....), and a percent of your purchase price will be donated to MFCAA.

1. Go to: <http://www.goodsearch.com/goodshop.aspx> (or goodsearch.com and choose "Shop")
2. Type Midwest Foster Care and Adoption into the "Who Do You Goodshop For" field
3. Click on the store where you want to shop...

EASY!



Sometimes we have a tendency, in our house, to get caught up in the traditional holiday activity of making long lists of every possible toy, gadget or piece of electronic equipment that might be available in the stores this year. My kids are just as greedy as everyone else's kids. As the toy commercials take over the slots recently vacated by the political ads, I'm hearing the resounding chorus of "I want that," just like you all do. But this year, we've started into the Holiday season with a slightly different frame of mind. It hasn't eliminated the "I want" discussions, but it has made a change. It's pretty remarkable, so I thought I'd share it with you in the hopes that maybe you'd take the idea and run with it.

Several weeks ago, at the beginning of November, my family was sitting in church on a Sunday morning. As I often do, I glanced over at my kids to see if they were listening at all, and discovered that my fourteen year old daughter Emma was actually paying attention. This was not typical. But during this service the pastor was discussing the theme of gratitude. As he spoke about the importance of remembering those from our past that we really ought to be thanking, Emma tapped me on the shoulder. "Hey, Mom, I have an idea. Remind me after church."

Emma's idea was brilliant. She decided we should work on sending out some 'thank you' notes to people we ought to be appreciating. We stopped at Walgreen's on the way home from church and cleared out their thank you card selection. After lunch we cleaned off the table and everyone who is old enough to know how to write sat down with a blank piece of paper. Seven Ross kids, ranging in age from 9-14 made lists of thirty people they have a reason to be grateful for. We had to do some negotiating in the lists. You couldn't include dead people (like Jesus...carry over from church), you couldn't include little kids (I'm not sure what you are thanking your baby sister for), and you had to be thankful for more than just stuff someone gave you (birthday gifts). I wanted them to identify the real ways in which someone had made a difference in their lives.

That first Sunday we started out by writing 8 cards each, so that we were caught up. We wanted one card per day in November. It took a couple of hours to get the idea, and focus on what we have to be grateful for, but they did a really remarkable job. I took on the task of looking up the addresses we'd need on Whitepages.com, and sending the cards out. Weirdly, I noticed, our typical after church fighting didn't happen. They worked hard on those cards for a long time, and I didn't hear sniping or tattling. I heard laughing and discussion, but none of the bad stuff.

The second Sunday, as soon as I pulled out the cards, they knew what to do. Some of them had heard from people who had received their cards during the week before. They liked the fact that their cards were making other people happy. So, they sat right down and started on the next week's worth of thank you notes. Again, we had some pretty concentrated effort, some giggles and some talking, but no fighting. Randy and I, having seen the effect this was having on the kids, decided we'd get busy and make our own lists. We did a batch of letters to folks and then I addressed, stamped and sent out the kids' notes and our letters.

I enjoyed the addressing and stamping, as I got a chance to read some of the kids' notes. I didn't edit them. I sent them as they were. Some of them were pretty funny, and still others touched me deeply. David wrote a letter to the rock band Queen. He thanked them for the good songs they sing. I think he is fond of the "We are the Champions" song. I had to look up the correct amount of postage to mail that one to Surrey, England. Jimmy sent one to the Music Director at our church. Among other things his letter said, "You Rock, Man. Literally." Three of them (two African American and one Caucasian) sent letters to Barack Obama thanking him for changing the future for black people in America. We sent those to his Chicago campaign office. All of them wrote to current and former teachers, camp counselors, and friends. David thanked someone at school for giving him a taco one day at lunch. Jimmy thanked the school nurse for giving him the medicine he takes at school. "My mom wants me to do well at school and if you weren't there to give me my meds, I might be more Locco," he said. Damion now 14, who was a career level child in residential treatment when he came to join our family at age 11, wrote me a very touching card thanking me for not giving up on him. A couple of the kids thanked their birth mothers or fathers for the gift of giving them life.

The third Sunday, as we sat down to get to work on the cards, the phone rang. It was a youth pastor from our church that had received a card from Emma. He told her how touched he'd been by her card. Most kids, he said, don't do things like tell him that they appreciate what he does. He wanted her to know that getting that card really mattered to him. We heard from our kids' therapist who had gotten cards from two of them. He said that he'd been feeling pretty discouraged when he got the cards, and it had really picked him up. We heard from old nannies we hadn't seen in ages, who suddenly dropped by. I got an amazing letter from an old friend I had written to. My adult kids, who sometimes come by on the weekend, were pretty impressed with their little brothers and sisters (as they got some notes), and made some noise about the fact that they ought to do something like this themselves. Not only was this little gratitude project of Emma's making a difference in the behavior and the attitudes of my kids, it was also making a huge difference to the people getting the notes.

This fourth Sunday, we'll finish the notes for the people on our lists. We'll send out our last batch of Sunday thank you notes, and we'll look ahead to the celebration of Thanksgiving. For the first time ever, I'm pretty sure that my kids are going to have a real, personal understanding of the idea of Thanksgiving. Something about thinking about what people have done for you, and then acting on that by putting those thoughts down on a little Walgreen's card, has been a small miracle in our house. My kids have learned that their words matter to lots of other people in this world. They've counted their blessings this month in a way they've never done before. Our hearts are overflowing with joy while we're doing this project, and it carries over to the rest of the week in many ways.

Our little holiday miracle seems like a pretty amazing way to head into the Holiday season for us, and so I thought I'd share it with all of you. May you be inspired to make miracles happen in your homes this year and every year. For the staff and the board of MFCAA, I wish you all Holiday Joy this season.

Best Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season!  ,MFCAA Executive Director

Pointers for Professional Parents:

Teamwork is a pretty big goal of the child welfare system. None of us likes to feel as if we aren't respected or that our opinions are discounted. We know how important we are in the lives of our kids, and we expect others to recognize that as well. However, expecting professional treatment requires from us the effort to provide professional input. We're busy taking care of kids, so from time to time we all get a little behind. This month we'd like to remind you that a few small things will make a big difference in terms of establishing respect for yourself as a professional and making the system work for the kids in your care.



Foster parents are the child's school advocate. You participate in parent-teacher conferences, you receive report cards and disciplinary notices, and you help develop Individualized Education Plans. In order for the Children's Division to do its job in ensuring that kids educational needs are met, it is necessary for the foster parent to **provide the CD worker with copies of IEP's, report cards, disciplinary notices and other communications of relevance** to be included in the Education Section of each child's file. These documents may be critically important in the future when that child moves or returns home. They may make the difference in when a child gets in to the next school, in the provision of support services and in obtaining the necessary credits for graduation. Please make sure you are regularly getting copies of those papers to the child's Alternative Care worker.

As foster parents we have the opportunity to participate in many meetings in which decisions about the future of the child are discussed. We strongly encourage you to do your best to participate in person as often as possible, and by phone if in-person participation isn't possible. You **should never miss an FST, PPRT, Staffing or Court Hearing** for a child in your care.

As a part of their ongoing efforts to improve communication, the Missouri Office of State Courts Administrators has developed, through its Juvenile Court Improvement Project, a report form through which foster parents can submit a separate report to the court outlining their observations about the child. That form (similar to one created by MFCAA for use in Jackson County several years ago) has now been adopted state-wide. We encourage you to visit our website at www.mfcaa.org to download a copy of the statewide **Caregiver Report to the Court** form. Submit it to your court in advance of a hearing, per the instructions. Your voice matters, but the court can't hear it unless you provide it to them in person and/or in writing.

Finally, we have two opportunities for further participation in the 'team' to offer you today. Newly posted on the MFCAA website is the Kansas City area **Form 414-B**. Similar to a form that has long been used in Jackson County for CD workers to evaluate their experiences with foster parents, this form was developed by MFCAA to collect information from foster, kinship and adoptive parents on their experiences with Children's Division staff members. The 414-B form can be downloaded at www.mfcaa.org. In the months of January and February 2009, all CD staff (except administrative staff) will be evaluated in performance reviews. CD Jackson County Administration has assured us that these 414-B forms will be considered during the process of that review if they are received in the CD office prior to the end of this year. We encourage you to share your experiences, both positive and negative, with the CD through these forms so that we do our part in helping the CD to develop the best possible workforce to serve the kids we love and care for.

Additionally, the CD is actively looking for **community participants** (foster parents and other interested community members) to participate occasionally in **Permanency Planning Review Teams and/or Adoption Staffings** for children in foster care. This is a great opportunity for people who don't have lots of time to give, as it can be scheduled for times when the volunteer is available. If you know anyone who may be interested, or you are able to participate, please contact JoDene Bogart at 889-2979, or via e-mail at JoDene.Bogart@dss.mo.gov for more information or to sign up.

monday		tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
December 		2 	3	4	5  No Training in Dec	6
8	9 	10	11	12  MFCAA Christmas Party	13	
14	15 Christmas Program Gift Pick-Up	16 	17	18	19  No Training in Dec	20
21	22	23 	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> MFCAA CLOSED	25 <i>Christmas</i> MFCAA CLOSED	26 MFCAA CLOSED	27
28	29 MFCAA CLOSED	30 MFCAA CLOSED	31 MFCAA CLOSED	1 MFCAA CLOSED		

NOTE: On the 1st Friday of the month,

the Food Pantry and Clothes Closet are



Clothes Closet
10a-2p



Food Pantry
9a-2p



Training
6:30p



Career/Behavioral Training—7p
(6:30p dinner)

*For Dental Van Appointments:
Bobbie Mitchell/ 816-889-3512

Make 2009 a great year for kids in foster care....

Become a foster parent or encourage someone you know to become one! If you are already a foster parent, you are the best recruiter we have for new foster parents. Maybe you know someone who has been thinking about fostering for years, or just someone you've always thought would be a great foster parent. Have them give us a call! We would love to answer their questions about fostering and talk to them about becoming a part of our new foster home licensing program. (No pressure, and no obligation – just a friendly, informative chat.) We are especially interested in people who are willing to consider fostering school-aged kids (especially teens) and siblings, and those interested in fostering to adopt. **Don't delay** – our next STARS class begins January 10th!

Contact Suzen: 816-350-0215 or suzen@mfcaa.org

MFCAA Christmas Party

-REMINDER-

All of our Members and their children are invited to join us for our Annual MFCAA Christmas Party!

- Dec. 12th
- The American Royal
(same place as last year-get directions at mfcaa.org: click on Christmas Party RSVP, on the right side of the page)
- 6p-8:30p
- **RSVP: By Dec. 1st, to Becky (becky@mfcaa.org, or 816-350-0215, or at mfcaa.org)**

RSVP IS REQUIRED.

Include your name, the total number of children attending, and the total number of people in your party.



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—There is NO TRAINING IN DECEMBER.

MFCAA CLOSED DEC. 24-JAN. 1

Please make a note on your calendar that MFCAA will be closed Dec. 24-Jan.1. Clothes Closet and Food Pantry services will not be available during that time. Please make plans, if needed, to visit the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry on or before Tues, Dec. 23. If you have any kind of emergency during the time the office is closed, please call the main office at 816-350-0215. An emergency number will be listed on the voice recording, and staff will check messages daily.

MFCAA's Clothing Closet provides clothing, shoes, coats, toys, high chairs, car seats and more to our members. Clothing Closet hours are from 10a-2p on Tuesdays and Fridays, or by appointment.



We Still Need Food For Holiday Meals! Help A Family Enjoy Christmas Dinner.

As you plan the menu for your Christmas dinner, keep MFCAA in mind. When you're shopping for your holiday meal, buy two of a few things on your list and bring the items by MFCAA on the 22nd. We'll have it out and ready for our families during our Dec. 23rd Food Pantry hours.

If you are interested in holding a food drive within your club or organization let us know and we can get you brochures, MFCAA info, or anything else you need... Contact Becky (becky@mfcaa.org or 816-350-0215).

The Food Pantry is open Tues & Fri, 9a-2p, for basic items. If you need canned or household goods call Becky for an appointment. On the first Friday of the month, The Food Pantry is NOT open from 9a-2p.



NEW PLAYGROUND AT MFCAA RESOURCE CENTER

A ribbon cutting ceremony took place at the MFCAA Resource Center on Drumm Farm, on November 20th. MFCAA Executive Director, Lori Ross, Drumm Farm Executive Director, Rufus Little, Board members and staff from Drumm Farm and MFCAA joined together to celebrate this joint venture.

The ceremony's most excited attendees were the children who will be enjoying this new play area. The children who are part of the Drumm Farm families and several of the children of MFCAA's foster and adoptive families were delighted to be among the first to enjoy this delightful new playground.

Ross noted that, “The foster and adoptive parents who come to the Drumm Campus to take advantage of the many supports offered here are so thrilled their children can safely play on this beautiful new playground. Drumm has always felt like a welcoming community for the abused and neglected children of the Kansas City area, and this playground is another step toward creating a truly unique and valuable resource for the metro Kansas City community.”

Both Rufus Little and Lori Ross said, “The ability to carry on the missions of our organizations would not be possible without the help of our community supporters. We were lucky to receive grants from the Cable and Cavanah families, Oppenheimer Brothers Foundation, William T. Kemper Foundation and Independence Rotary Club. The Board of Trustees, staff and children of both Drumm Farm and Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association are very grateful for their kindness and generosity.”

MAJOR FEDERAL CHILD WELFARE CHANGES

On October 7, 2008, President Bush signed the **Foster Connection to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (Public Law 110-351)** which is the first comprehensive reform of child welfare financing in 28 years. The new law will provide additional federal support to states so that they can provide additional supports to relative caregivers and adoptive parents, and enhance the services that are provided to foster children.

Many of you will recall the crisis a few years ago related to proposed changes in the adoption subsidy program in Missouri. For many of you, for the first time ever you had to find out whether or not your child's adoption subsidy contract included federal title IV-E dollars or was all funded by the state of Missouri. You discovered that federal dollars brought with them protections from the budget cuts of the Missouri legislature. Luckily those egregious provisions were ended with a successful federal court lawsuit.

This new federal legislation, over time, will **allow all children in foster care to be eligible for the federally matched adoption subsidy**. As you may recall IV-E eligibility has been tied to the birth parent's income at the time the child is removed from the home. The new law gradually (over the next ten years) eliminates that eligibility requirement. Beginning in October 2009, all children who have been in foster care for 60 consecutive months (5 years) and/or children adopted at age 16 and older, and any siblings adopted with them, will be eligible for federal adoption subsidy support. From then on, each year thereafter the age limit will be reduced by two years. For example, in October of 2010, children aged 14 and older, and their siblings adopted with them, will be eligible for federal adoption support. By 2018, all children in foster care will qualify for the federal dollars.

These changes will gradually bring hundreds of millions of dollars worth of state savings in general revenue dollars that had previously been paid out in subsidies to kids who had been ineligible for the federal match. All states must continue to use those dollars to support child welfare services. MFCAA will advocate for those dollars to be applied to increase the maintenance rates provided to foster parents and the adoption subsidy paid to adoptive parents until Missouri has reached the **Minimally Adequate Rate for Children** as established by the groundbreaking MARC study earlier this year.

Also important are changes related to **supports for relatives** who take guardianship of children in foster care. The new law provides federal funding for relatives caring for kids who (1) were eligible for IV-E foster care funding while they were placed in foster care with the relative for at least six continuous months, (2) will not return to their biological parents, and for whom adoption with the relative is not a possible option, (3) have a strong bond with the relative caregiver, and the relative caregiver is willing to care for the child permanently, and (4) if age 14 or over agrees with this permanency plan. The law requires that all adult relatives must be notified within 30 days after a child is removed from his/her home to ensure that relatives have a chance to participate in the child's care. The law also provides that on a case-by-case basis, licensing standards not related to safety (like the size of the home) can be waived for relative foster parents.

Additionally, states must now make reasonable efforts to place **brothers and sisters** together in foster care, adoption, and/or guardianship unless the placement would negatively affect any sibling's safety or well-being. The law mandates that states be responsible for facilitating regular sibling visitation for separated siblings.

In relation to **older youth in care**, the new federal law creates the first ever federal funding to support the foster care placement of youth aged 19, 20 and 21. Eligible youth will be those who (1) are finishing high school or a GED program, (2) are enrolled in college or vocational school, (3) are participating in activities to enhance job opportunities, i.e.: Voc Rehab or other similar programs, (4) are employed at least 80 hours per month, or (5) are medically incapable of meeting the above criteria. Additionally adoption subsidies which are extended past the age of 18, for children adopted at age 16 or older, will be federally matched. Independent living services and ETV (Education and Training Vouchers) will also be provided to older youth who are adopted or placed in guardianship at age 16 or older. Finally, agencies must be responsible for helping youth plan to 'age out'. In the 90 days prior to the time a youth leaves foster care, the agency must help them develop a transition plan with specific options for housing, health insurance, education, mentoring, support services and employment help.

The law **addresses health care needs** of foster youth, requiring states to coordinate and oversee health services by developing a plan to (1) provide initial and ongoing health care screenings, (2) monitor and treat health needs, (3) share up-to-date medical information with providers, (4) ensure continuity in health care services, (5) ensure oversight of prescription medication use, and (6) consult with doctors and others about the child's health.

A SPECIAL THANKS goes to the Grandview High School DECA Club. The group collected 750 pairs of new socks for MFCAA's Clothes Closet. In addition, several of the group's members interviewed Executive Director Lori Ross, and Clothes Closet Coordinator Becky Hughes, and will be writing a paper about MFCAA and their experience.

THANKS TO ALL INVOLVED!

The law also takes on **educational stability for kids in foster care**. State agencies are required to consider school issues when making placements of children, in order to attempt to keep kids in (or as close as possible to) their home school setting. The law requires officials to keep kids in their current schools if it's in their best interest to do so. It also allows states to claim partial reimbursement from the federal government for the costs of providing transportation to children in order to keep them in their original school. When kids must change schools, the new law provides for immediate enrollment and transfer of records.

While Missouri is ahead of the game on many of the issues highlighted in the federal law, there is still work to do to ensure every foster and adopted child in Missouri the opportunities for permanency and success that this law envisions. MFCAA will continue to work with state officials to make sure these provisions are translated to better services for Missouri's kids.