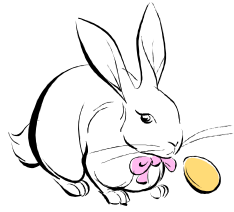




Midwest Foster Care and  
Adoption Association  
3210 S Lee's Summit Rd  
Independence, MO  
64055



NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
INDEP, MO  
PERMIT NO. 535

**APR 2010**

**MFCAA Members Skating Party**



Dust off your roller skates and  
mark your calendars for :

**Sunday April 18<sup>th</sup> from 3:30PM-5:30PM**

**Winnwood Skating Rink/4426 NE Winn Rd/  
KC, MO**

**Cost: \$5 for the entire family!**  
(includes admission, skates and  
admission to the Bounce House).

We have reserved the rink for 125 skaters, so please  
RSVP as soon as possible to reserve your spot. Because  
we have a limit on our number of skaters, please bring  
only members of your family currently living in your  
house. If you have family or friends who would like to  
come just to watch, that is fine, as we do not have to  
include non-skaters in our 125 count. **RSVP to**  
**fran@mfcaa.org or 816 350-0215**. Please include the  
**number of skaters, and the number of non-skaters.**



**Yummy**

**Ribs for Kids**

**Mark your calendars  
7th Annual Ribs for Kids**

**May 1st, 2010**

**McGonigle's Market**

**1307 West 79th Street**

**K.C., MO 64114**

**Time: 7:30 a.m. till 6 p.m.**



## Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



### **Letter From the Executive Director**

#### In this Issue:

Skate Party & Ribs 4 Kids—Pg.1  
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Dear Friends;

In 1985, (the dark ages) when I started doing foster care, the general perspective of those who were licensing foster parents was that anyone who was interested in adopting should definitely NOT be a foster parent. Foster parents should concern themselves only with the care of children with the goal of reunification.

This was a tall order even back then. Families who declared that they had no interest in adopting were accepted into the program, but that didn't stop them from falling in love with the kids in their care. That natural desire to love and protect the children who have been brought to your home for just that purpose is the reason for both (1) foster parent's reluctance to interact with and sympathize with birth parents, and (2) foster parent's important role in doing just that.

As American kids growing up, in every childhood story, we've heard about good guys and bad guys. I can remember listening at the foot of my grandma's rocker recliner (the green one...grandpa's was brown), to the stories she read out of the Grimm's Fairy Tales and Disney books. She read to me about Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel, Cinderella and Snow White. She read stories of children who were tortured and mistreated (which kids aren't supposed to hear in this much kinder and gentler age), All those kids were the victims of evil adults, with no apparent motivation for their dastardly deeds.

Maybe it's because of hearing stories like these that whole generations of Americans seem to be comfortable with things being defined as strictly dichotomous. It's either right or it's wrong. It's either good or it is evil. And so, when we consider the parents who have abused or neglected their children to the point that they need to be parented by us, we tend to generally lump them in with all the other bad guys out there.

Do-gooder foster parents, who come into this hoping to help kids, then find ourselves challenged to the core by the idea of things not being quite as simple and clear as we'd imagined they were. We don't like the dark side. We fear perceived evil. So when we are challenged to move out of our comfort zone and interact with, and even partner with, the birth parents of children in foster care, we balk at the idea. And yet, unless we do exactly that, we don't honor the very children we hope to help.

Over the next two months, I am going to share some stories with you of my birth parent experiences. The names will be changed to protect the parties, but the real experiences, along with my real thoughts and feelings will not be changed. I'm not doing this to shame or guilt myself or anyone else. Rather I'm doing this to try to ignite a shift in thinking.

Some years ago, Jackson County was gifted with some extra funding for social service supports as a result of our notorious and historic Consent Decree. Unfortunately, when the agency was finally able to exit that lawsuit, the mandate to continue the special funding available here in Jackson County was ended as well.

As a result, and especially during this economically trying time, some of the services we've all grown to rely on are decreasing.

Probably more than ten years ago, parent aides began to transport and supervise most of the visits between our foster children and their birth parents. This freed up some of the social worker's time to focus on other aspects of managing cases, and it created a buffer between the foster parents and the birth parents in which very little contact on a regular basis was necessary.

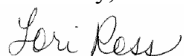
A whole generation of foster parents and social workers have grown up doing this work in a time in which there has been a self-imposed great divide in those relationships. But some of us remember a time before the great divide. During that time, we not only saw birth parents at court and at meetings, we also transported to, sat through and supervised parent/child visits on a weekly or more frequent basis. We befriended and supported birth parents, and we often served as natural supports long after the children left our care and returned home. Our relationships with those birth parents made caring for the children easier for us, transitioning the children back home easier for them, and (when that was not possible) relinquishing the children voluntarily for adoption easier for the birth parents who ended up in that place.

This type of frequent contact between foster parents, birth parents, and social workers allowed for direct information to be presented to the court (workers and foster parents could testify to facts they had witnessed, as opposed to heard about from a third party). Because foster parents frequently supervised visits in which therapists were working with parents on their issues, they developed working relationship with the therapists on the case as well. The benefits of this type of contact were tremendous for all of the folks who were directly involved in the child's life. So, when parent aides were created, for the sake of workload and convenience, all of those benefits were sacrificed.

In times of financial strife, we often have to get back to the basics, and such is the case with visitation between birth parents and their children. In the near future, the dollars to fund supportive services (like the majority of parent aides) are going away, and foster parents will need to step up to the professional plate and take on more and more responsibility for these contacts.

That's all for now. Before you find yourself digging your heels in and adopting a defensive position, please give me the benefit of the doubt and read my articles over the next few months. I think that you'll find my experiences are entertaining, and I suspect that if you aren't already nodding with me, you may come around to my way of thinking. I hope that you'll find yourselves increasingly willing to take a chance and step outside of the box, for your benefit, but mostly for the benefit of your kids.

Sincerely,



Lori Ross  
Executive Director

### **Foster Parents Bill of Rights**

The Foster Parent Bill of Rights training is an excellent way for you to empower yourselves and to truly be a part of the professional team.

The Bill of Rights was passed into law in 2008 and we are anxious to make everyone aware of its content, bringing respect to our common mission of helping heal and finding permanency for the abused and neglected children we care for everyday. Joint training sessions have been designed to bring workers and foster parents together to become aware of these laws and to put them into practice here in Jackson County.

The training dates are:

**June 4th, 9-11 and 1-3 MFCAA**  
**September 24<sup>th</sup>, 9-11 and 1-3 North KC Hospital**  
**October 22, 9-11 and 1-3 Dolir Building, KC**

This training is 2 hours and you can sign up by calling Tammy Merriman @ 816 889-2380.  
**PLEASE CALL TODAY TO SIGN UP FOR ONE OF THESE 2 HOUR TRAININGS!**

The Brightside Alliance



Providing FRIENDSHIP and HOPE to the kids who need it most!

## Become a member of The Bright Side Alliance

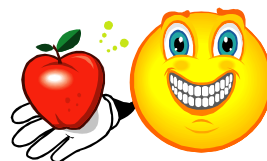
We have a new opportunity for young men and women who want to make a difference. The Bright Side Alliance is an exciting new auxiliary group dedicated to helping meet the needs of foster and adopted children in our community

Goals include increasing awareness of the combined missions of Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association and Drumm Farm among young adults. Enhancing the volunteer base of both organizations and providing opportunities for children to experience strong relationships with healthy caring adults and assisting in creating additional revenue for both organizations through assisting in fund raising events.

This is a great opportunity to meet other likeminded young people interested in making a difference in the lives of children who have been abused and neglected. You'll also experience the great feeling that comes from knowing that you have become part of something bigger than yourself. By joining, you'll be connecting with others across the metro area in supporting some of our community's most vulnerable children and the families caring for them.

Join the Bright Side Alliance by emailing Linda McNicholas at [linda@mfcfaa.org](mailto:linda@mfcfaa.org) or Kate Schwaller [kate@drumm.org](mailto:kate@drumm.org)

## The Children's Orchard



The Children's Orchard and MFCAA believe all children have the right to a loving family and the joy of childhood hopes and dreams. In support of Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association they are offering a [10% Discount Card](#) to MFCAA members while supplies last. You may pick-up your card from Becky Hughes at MFCAA. We want to extend a BIG THANK YOU to our friends at The Children's Orchard for this gracious offer.



Let's get together. Join Team MFCAA  
The Nancy Hodge Shy and  
Jay W. Jensen Run/Walk  
Saturday, June 26th  
[www.nancyrunjaywalk.com](http://www.nancyrunjaywalk.com)

The 2010 Run/Walk will benefit the three  
organizations that were near and dear to  
Nancy and Jay's life:

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association,  
Northland Health Care Access &  
Synergy Services



### Tooth Trouble By Steven Zuckerman

Steven Zuckerman is a poet and writer living in San Jose, California. He has the honor of being included in the Directory of American Poets and Fiction Writers.

Steve taught young children for over fifteen years. He has a wonderful dentist who needs a sense of humor to have him as a patient. Tooth Trouble is a funny story about a young girl, her dentist, and the tooth fairy.

Steve is donating 15 books for distribution to MFCAA members. Look for them at future Dental Van appointments while supplies last or in our lending library.



**These classes are a great opportunity for training!**

## **YOU, ME & THE KIDS**

This training was held in September of 2009 and proved to be a very enjoyable positive experience for all involved. We had foster parents together with Division staff and worked on common issues that we shared, first recognizing they are a problem and then jointly coming up with solutions that are attainable.

The trainings are scheduled before school lets out on 3 consecutive Fridays. They are held at Drumm Farm, 3210 Lee's Summit Rd, Independence, Mo, in the Dining Hall.

Each session is 3 hours. We do ask you to invite your favorite division staff member to accompany you, but it is not mandatory.

### **Training dates:**

**Session 1 – Here We Go Again**, 4/16/10, 9AM-12PM. We give you this topic and let you discuss with your table what this means to you.

**Session 2 - Tick, Tock**, 4/16/10, 1PM-4PM. This section is centered on juggling our very busy schedules vs. responsibilities.

**Session 3 – Staying Put**, 4/23/10, 9AM-12PM. This session discusses placements, replacements and two week notices.













**Session 4 – Mission Impossible**, 4/23/10, 1PM-4PM. At this session we talk of challenging cases and children, how to handle hotlines and high profile media cases.

**Session 5 – Let's Make Some Plans**, 4/30/10, 9AM-12PM. We talk of permanency for children in these sessions.

**Session 6 – Let's Talk**, 4/30/10, 1PM-4PM. How can we do a better job of working together for our common goal...the child?

These sessions spark lots of great conversations between the worker and foster parents. By working together on these topics, we can send our UNITED message to Jefferson City to create change where it is needed. We are happy to send our creative solutions as our message, but we need YOU to come share your ideas.

Please call Kim at 816-350-0215 to reserve your spot. You may also email her at [kim@mfcaa.org](mailto:kim@mfcaa.org)

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
<b>APR</b>				<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> 	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b> 	<b>5</b>	<b>6 Dental Van at MFCAA</b> 	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>  	<b>17</b>
<b>18 Skate Party</b>  3:30-5:30	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> 	

NOTE: On the first Friday of each month, the Food Pantry is available to those who attend Training (in the evening). It is not open 9a-2p on this day.

 Clothes Closet 10a-2p	 Food Pantry 9a-2p	 First Friday Training 6:30p	 Third Friday Training—7p (6:30p dinner RSVP)	*For Dental Van Appointments: Bobbie Mitchell/ 816-889-3512
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## Hello Fostering Families!



### BUT WE NEED MORE FAMILIES!!!!

We are seeking foster parents and children in foster care to participate in a research project about what makes kids resilient. To participate, we need foster parents and children who are at least 8 years old to complete surveys. Both you and your child will receive payment for your participation each time you complete surveys.

Worried about having time to do the surveys? Don't be! We can do surveys during the evenings and weekends at a community location convenient to your home and your family's schedule—whatever works best with your family.

Please join us in this important effort to help youth in foster care – your participation is essential to helping us make the system better for youth in foster care.

If you are interested in the **SPARK Project**, please call the **SPARK Project** team at (913) 897-8454. We're looking forward to getting to know you and your family!



# 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**—On-site Trainings are held at MFCAA, in the 2nd building on the far LEFT of the drive. Please park in the paved lot (continue past the training building, and follow the drive as it curves right), then walk to the training building (for more info, call Justin at 816-350-0215). Childcare is provided, during both training sessions, for children ages 3 and older.

## ON-SITE TRAINING SCHEDULE:

### **April 2/6:30p – Be a Realistic "Hero"**

Foster and adoptive parents make their lives turn over and do flips to help children affected by abuse and neglect. Sometimes the desire to help every child puts foster parents in positions to make poor placement decisions. It is critical for parents to know what their limits are/should be. Knowing yourself and what your strengths and weaknesses are goes a long way in making good choices for children that can be served in your home.

Presenter: Susan Peach —Licensed Therapist

### **April 16/6:30p Dinner (RSVP only if attending dinner-tammy@mfcaa.org) 7p meeting**

#### **What do you know about the Deaf Culture?**

As we continue to have more hearing impaired children in foster care, it is very important to learn how their world works and how to make sure you can be a good part of it. How do you communicate with a deaf person? What is so different about someone that cannot hear tone of voice and inference that only voices give you? Do you know anyone that is deaf or hard of hearing. Join us for a good glimpse into the world of the deaf community and how we can successfully interact with its members.

Presenter: Becky Beck — Lead Institute

## **Clothes Closet & Food Pantry**

MFCAA's Clothing Closet provides clothing, shoes, coats, toys, high chairs, car seats and more, free of charge, to all MFCAA Members. In addition, our Birthday Closet offers parents the opportunity to choose a gift for each of their children. Clothing Closet hours are 10a-2p on Tuesdays and Fridays. Call Becky for special appointments (contact info below).



### THANKS

We would like to take a moment to thank everyone who thought of us over the last month, when deciding where to donate the items their children no longer use.

We appreciate your generosity!

MFCAA's Food Pantry provides basic food items, free of charge, to all Members, and is open Tues and Fri from 9a-2p. In addition, the Food Pantry offers extended items, such as canned goods and hygiene products. These items are available to each member monthly, by appointment. Contact Becky for an appointment at 816-350-0215 or becky@mfcaa.org.



### **CAN YOU HELP ?**

We are in need of book shelves. If you've gone digital with your book reading and have an extra book shelf or two, please call our office on 816-350-0215 and speak with Linda or Fran.

## Parent Child Visitation



Dear Resource Families,

The Jackson County Family Court has pulled together a workgroup of various stakeholders to discuss parent/child visits.

This workgroup is comprised of members of the following: Judge Roldan, Commissioners Allen, Merrigan and Peterson, members of the Office of the Guardian ad Litem, members of the Division and its contracted case management partners, a private attorney, MFCAA, DLS, the Juvenile Officer and the Family Court Administrator.

We've met twice over the last two months and these meetings have generated some great conversations. The premise of the workgroup is the belief that increased parent/child visitation increases timely permanency.

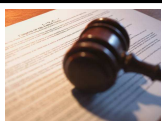
We have discussed a variety of issues including barriers; use of volunteers and volunteer locations; increasing biological, foster, relative and kin participation in visits; levels of supervision needed; and trainings for anyone who supervises a visit.

One of the things that you as resource providers will see as result is increased attention on your ability to assist with these visits. I fully believe that the ideal situation for supervised visitation (if needed) involves the family currently caring for the child(ren). This is a great way for resource families to model parenting techniques for biological parents, gives both sets of parents an opportunity to share information about the child(ren) and should increase the comfort level of both families as transitions into and out of foster care occur.

I am hopeful that as this workgroup continues to meet, you will give consideration on how you can assist the children placed in your homes as they visit with their biological families.

As always, thank you for everything you do for our children and families!

Virginia Lewis-Brunk, MSW  
Regional Director  
Jackson County Children's Division



### Just an important thought about the Foster Parents Bill of Rights

Are you really a member of a professional team? Is it because you were told you were or because you are treated as one? Foster parents DO have rights, but you need to be aware of them to enforce them!

Empower yourself by signing up for one of the 8 scheduled trainings (see page 3 for dates and times) on the **Foster Parents Bill of Rights** so that you will recognize what it means to truly be a part of a professional team!