



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



**MAY 2010**

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INDEP, MO  
PERMIT NO. 535



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)  
or call MFCAA office on 816 350-0215  
Cost is \$25, kids are free & lunch is included

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  
and  
Synergy Services.



**New Kids' Magazine**  
The Missouri Department of Conservation  
is publishing a new kids' magazine.

**"XPLOR"**  
Six times a year your child  
will receive eye-popping  
art, photos, and stories about Missouri's  
coolest critters, niftiest natural places,  
liveliest outdoor activities and people  
who've made a living in the wild. Don't  
keep the door closed another minute.  
Come outside with us and "XPLOR"  
Sign up now at [www.xplormo.org](http://www.xplormo.org) or call  
573-522-4115, ext 3856 or 3249

*A guardian's name and address is required  
with the subscription*





## Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



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

#### In this Issue:

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Dear Friends;

Last month I challenged you to give some serious thought to your feelings about birth parents. I suggested that we need to begin a paradigm shift in both our thoughts and our efforts related to our children's birth parents. This month I'm going to share with you (in abbreviated form...much less than the 25 years it has actually taken) part of the history of this shift in thinking in my own life.

I was like most new foster parents, twenty-some years ago, when I started fostering. I couldn't comprehend the tragedy of child abuse. I couldn't imagine that a child existed that I wouldn't love simply because of their innocence. I couldn't understand how any adult could be so weak, or angry, or out of control as to make choices that hurt or endangered their children. Not only did I dislike the birth parents of abused kids, but I was also pretty nervous about them. I didn't want them to know who I was, or where I lived. I kept my last name quiet, and I worried that they'd find my address and come cause problems in my home. I just knew that they were dangerous.

The first birth parents I worked with, in spite of my fears and because I had no choice, were the parents of my first foster child. The process threw us together. We were required to be present together in certain meetings, and so I went with much trepidation. These were my daughter R's parents. Her father had been accused of sexual abuse, her mother was mentally retarded, and they lived in abject filth. This was a family in which the most horrendous of crimes against children had been perpetrated by the father, and the mother had let this situation go on for not only these children but six children previously. She had chosen to reject her children to protect her husband. I was outraged, and nervous about the very idea of interacting with these people in person. However, the experience was much less eventful than I had imagined.

Both Mom and Dad appeared to be cognitively dull. Dad was a tall, thin, goofy-looking middle aged man. Mom was short, round and had a beaked nose. She was missing most of her teeth. If it weren't for the heinous things I'd heard about them, my first reaction upon seeing them anywhere else would have been pity. Neither parent spoke much during the meetings. They seemed overwhelmed and intimidated by the 'system'. Afterwards, I can remember being surprised that they weren't threatening to me, as I'd expected them to be. Instead they just seemed sad and pathetic.

Later, I took six-year-old R to visits with her mother. Her father wasn't allowed any contact. I can remember sitting in visits with the mother. She had only one hour of supervised contact with her daughter each week. R would run and play and try to interact with her mother, but her mother would talk to the caseworker, or to me. Frequently she'd repeat the story she'd just told again and again. She sometimes brought snacks for R, but other than that, she didn't seem to be at all aware of the purpose of these meetings. In fact she barely acknowledged her daughter at all except for an initial and final hug, prompted by the worker. When R eventually got tired of seeking her mother's attention and not getting it, she turned to me. Her mother wasn't offended (as I'd imagined she might be), I'm not sure she even noticed. This was a sad and underwhelming experience. I felt sorry for the mother, the daughter, and the situation. I wasn't scared. I wasn't furious. I was just sad.

Another experience, a few years later, connected me to the mother of two little girls (8 and 11) who were placed in my home because their mother was in jail for shoplifting. Mom was an alcoholic and drug user, and had a long history of arrests for stealing. She was a big woman, who had a tough demeanor and attitude. She was a little more intimidating. But fortunately for me, she was intimidating from a distance at first, as she was locked behind bars. She wrote to her daughters and sent them little pictures she'd drawn in jail. Some of the letters were appropriate and filled with affectionate rambling. Others were far less appropriate.

In one letter, she complained extensively about my home. She was angry that we didn't have cable television for her daughters to watch. She mentioned all of the lovely things her girls had (which she had provided for them via her shoplifting career). She told the girls to be sure to keep the 'grubby foster kids hands off of their stuff'. Naturally that didn't fly with me. I forgot briefly that she was a large convicted criminal, and wrote her a long letter back telling her that she wouldn't have to worry about my grubby kids touching her girl's things, but for the fact that she was sitting in jail. I told her that I didn't appreciate her criticism of my home or family, and that since I was the person tucking her girls into bed each night; it might serve her well to have a little gratitude and appreciation for what I was doing. I sent it before I had a chance to really think about it.

Then I thought about it. I thought about the fact that she'd be out of jail shortly, and that she knew my address and that I'd basically just told her off. I wasn't really much of a fighter...and wasn't sure I'd want to learn to fight with someone who had just been released from prison. I was worried, until I got her next letter. In that letter, she apologized for her inappropriate comments, told me that I was exactly right, and thanked me for caring for her girls. That relationship lasted beyond the five years (off and on) that her girls spent in my care and continues to this day, as I'm still occasionally involved in their lives now that they are adults with their own children. In fact, Randy and I will fly to Florida next week to share with their mother our joy in the graduation of one of these girls (now in her thirties herself) from Nursing School. Their mother and I still don't like each other, but we have a mutual civil respect for each other, and that works for the girls.

As I spent more time forced into relationships with birth parents in the co-parenting situation that existed with my foster children, I became less fearful and intimidated. Maybe my confidence as a foster parent grew, or maybe I simply began to realize that every single one of the parents I was interacting with was far more scared of me (and this big system I was a part of) than I could ever be of them. We were holding their children hostage and without a doubt, despite their flaws, they all loved their children the best they knew how. When I used the manners that my momma taught me and treated them with kindness and basic respect, they responded frequently with gratitude and reached out to me as a point of human connectedness in this vast system.

One of the beautiful and unexpected gifts that comes from being part of this human service system, is the ability to reach out and connect (heart to heart) with other human beings. Stay tuned. Next month, I'll share some of my most awesome and life changing birth parent connections.

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 24th, 9-11 and 1-3 North KC Hospital**  
**October 22nd, 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.

The Brightside Alliance



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

## Become a member of The Bright Side Alliance

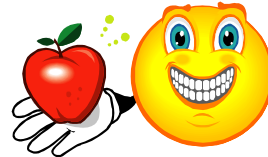
We have a new opportunity for young men and women who want to make a difference. The Bright Side Alliance is an exciting new auxiliary group dedicated to helping meet the needs of foster and adopted children in our community

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@mfcmaa.org](mailto:linda@mfcmaa.org) or Kate Schwaller [kate@drumm.org](mailto:kate@drumm.org)

## The Children's Orchard



The Children's Orchard and MFCMAA 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 MFCMAA members while supplies last. You may pick-up your card from Becky Hughes at MFCMAA. We want to extend a BIG THANK YOU to our friends at The Children's Orchard for this gracious offer.

### Foster Care & Adoption Discount Days CoCo Key Water Resort Missouri's Largest Indoor Water Resort 9103 East 39th St, Kansas City, MO 816 737-0200

**\$8.00** per person (subject to availability. May not be valid on holidays or special events.  
Restrictions or blackout dates may apply)

#### The Details Family Night

##### For individual family tickets

Request "Foster Care Discount Days" at the front desk of CoCo Key.

Available Monday-Thursday only, Blackout dates do apply

Pizza Hut & A&W located on property

Bring your own towel

No outside food or beverage allowed

Call CoCo Key and mention Foster Care & Adoption Discount Days for details.

To book a group of 15 or more, call Greg Madden on 816 737-4775.



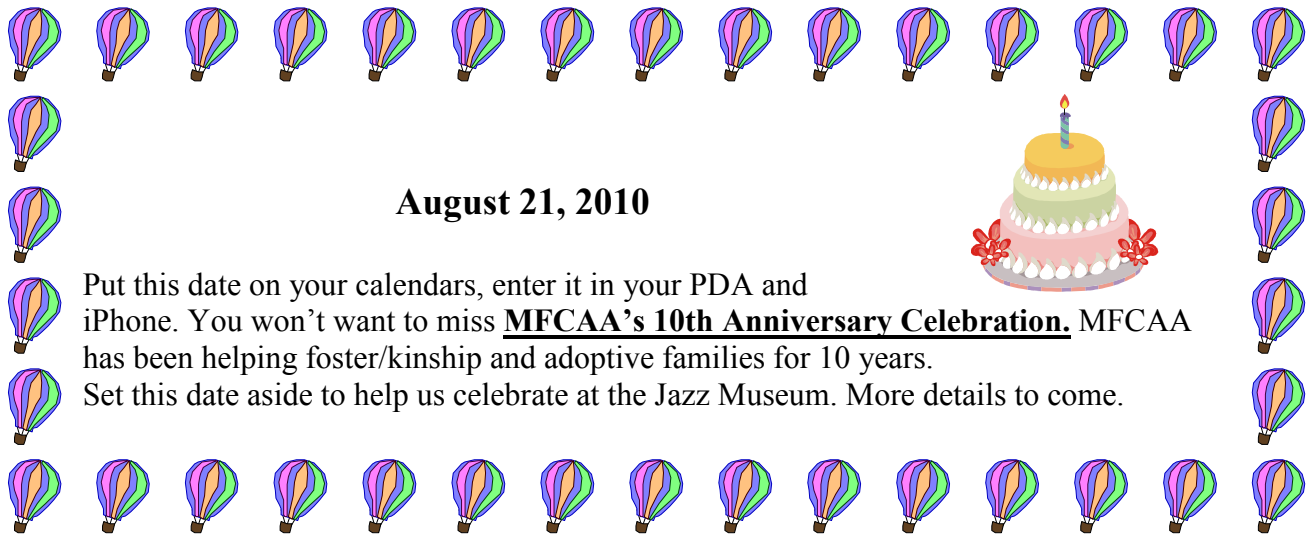
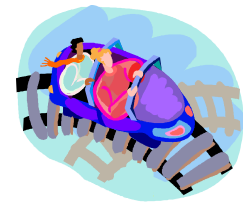
## Silver Dollar City • White Water • Showboat Branson Belle Branson Missouri 2010

Our families are always looking for ways to stretch the budget and still provide a fun time for all. A BIG THANK YOU to the people of Silver Dollar City again this year for allowing our members to participate in their Financial Hardship Group Program.

**Ticket prices:** Silver Dollar City (\$10.00 + tax), White Water (10.40 + tax), and Showboat Belle \$20.00 + tax). This program is not valid on Saturdays or Holidays (weekends following Holiday for all properties, as well as Friday or Saturdays 4pm & 8pm on the Showboat Branson Belle.

Your request must be submitted no later than 14 days prior to your planned visit. Be prepared with the date you wish to attend, the number of tickets you will need for ages 12 and over and the number of tickets for ages 4-11. We will also need your address and phone number. The name on your reservation form is the only person that may pick up tickets and ID is required.

If you are interested please contact Fran Hershey on 816 350-0215  
or by email [fran@mfcaa.org](mailto:fran@mfcaa.org).



**August 21, 2010**



Put this date on your calendars, enter it in your PDA and iPhone. You won't want to miss **MFCAA's 10th Anniversary Celebration**. MFCAA has been helping foster/kinship and adoptive families for 10 years.









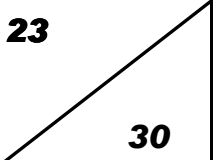
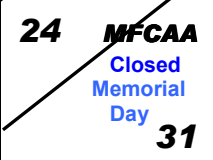


Set this date aside to help us celebrate at the Jazz Museum. More details to come.



### SCRAPBOOKING

Are you 8-18 and interested in a scrapbooking class? Please call the office of MFCAA at 816 350-0215 and let us know if you are interested and we will arrange a class. All you need are pictures for your scrapbook page.



sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
<b>MAY</b>						<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>  	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14 Dental Van</b> 	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>  	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> 	<b>24</b> <b>MFCAA</b> Closed Memorial Day 	<b>25</b> 	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>31</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

## Hello Fostering Families!

### 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:

**May 7/6:30p— "Sibling Bonds and the Importance of Secondary Attachments in Healing Trauma"**  
Presenter: Susan Peach —Licensed Therapist

**May 21/6:30p Dinner (RSVP only if attending dinner-tammy@mfcaa.org) 7p meeting**  
**"Parenting Beyond High School: What does it look like?"** This session will be geared for parents of children with behavioral and emotional issues and will focus on the special transitional needs of young adults (17-23) and how the role of parents changes (but remains critically important) during that time.  
Presenter: Susan Peach —Licensed Therapist

## **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.

# Earth Day! Recycling Maze

find the path from  
the recyclables to  
the recycling center!

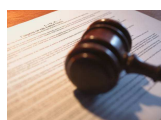


The Earth thanks you :)



**RECYCLING  
CENTER**

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## 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!