



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

November 2010

**CONFERENCE
INFORMATION INSIDE!**



We need donors to help with our adopt-a-family Christmas program.

Many of these families have opened every bed in their home in an effort to provide love and stability for children. Each family MFCAA pairs with a donor is making the ultimate commitment to our future by caring for the abused and neglected children of our community.

You can help in many ways: adopt-a-family, general donation of gifts, or cash donation. Over 100 of our children have not yet been matched with a holiday donor.

Visit our website for more information www.mfcaa.org or call our office on (816) 350-0215.

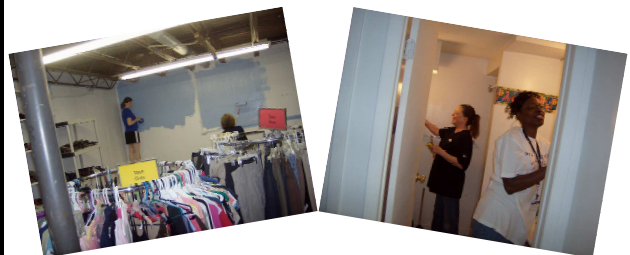


UMB Bank

Over twenty volunteers from UMB Bank-Corporate Support Services Division, with paint brushes in hand, visited MFCAA's Resource Center September 16th.

Before they left, our Food Pantry and Kid's Clothes Closet had a bright new look! White and grey walls are now cheerful shades of blue and sunshine yellow.

The employees of UMB have also committed to once again donate teen and pre-teen gifts to our Christmas program and to decorate our party space at the American Royal on December 10th.





Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



Letter From the Executive Director

In this Issue:

Donors Wanted & UMB Thanks—Pg. 1
 President's Letter—Pg. 2 & 3
 Christmas Party Information—Pg. 4
 Conference Dates & Information—Pg. 5
 Calendar & Reminders—Pg. 6 & 7
 Special Thanks to Donors/Volunteers—Pg. 8

Dear Friends,

I've had several experiences lately where I have witnessed the painful human struggle for power and control. In thinking about these very different experiences the underlying connecting thread has been the issue of power. Within the scope of work at MFCAA, we see daily examples of:

- horrendous abuse of power within a family which brings a child into foster care,
- the experience and perception of powerlessness (on the part of birth parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents) to interact within the child welfare system and achieve their desired goals,
- the abuses of power or the limits of power within child welfare agencies which leave children and families at risk of irreparable harm,
- and the universal struggle that each of these people endure trying to cope with or overcome the correlated feelings of inadequacy, hopelessness and frustration.

The need for power, control, and mastery are among a few well-recognized human needs. In his widely read humanist theory of personality, Abraham Maslow recognized this need as a part of his 'Hierarchy of Needs'. He touched on power and mastery in terms of its impact on 'esteem'. He said that humans have a need for a stable, firmly based, high level of self-respect, and respect from others. When these needs are satisfied, the person feels self-confident and valuable as a person in the world. When these needs are frustrated, the person feels inferior, weak, helpless and worthless.

Other psychologists have identified that our well-being as people is tied to our ability to create for ourselves enough material and emotional resources, our ability to fully participate in and determine what our life path will be, and our competence and ability to effectively navigate challenges along that path. In our social, community and family environments, power and control is what helps us to develop these three dimensions of wellness.

Because the child welfare system is a system of human beings interfering in the most personal of all human relationships, the family, we frequently get caught up in struggles which at their base are purely related to power. We lose sight of what the ultimate goal is, and frankly often forget that our focus should remain unilaterally on what is going to be ultimately best for a specific child or family. And when the 'what's best' argument is muddled by a clear division between the needs of the child or the needs of the family, we are even worse at figuring it out in a way that doesn't cause damage.

And most disturbing of all is the fact that we try to ignore the issue of power. We deny that a power struggle is what it is. We place blame or make excuses which only serve to make things worse. And worse often equals longer, which in the life of a child is unacceptable. Researchers have found that within systems "lack of reflection over power differentials can lead to disempowering outcomes even after achieving a seemingly participatory process. Failing to resolve divergent assumptions about power and purpose can lead to fissures that are difficult to overcome." (Chung and Lounsbury, 2006).

I see this all the time in Family Support Team meetings and Adoption Staffings. When the various folks sitting around the table cannot remain free from assumptions and biases, and when they cannot be honest about their own roles in the need to control the outcome, the damage to the relationships between the adults (who the kids are depending on to do what is best for them) is often irreparable. And the poison in the team's functioning is most clearly felt by the child.

Our goal at MFCAA for the ten years of our existence has been to empower foster and adoptive parents so that they can be the best possible caregivers for abused and neglected children. We've done that pretty well, but we continue to struggle daily with the conflicts we encounter within a system which is designed to have a 'seemingly participatory process', but which can in fact be a whole collection of little fiefdoms in which people are consistently struggling to have the last word. It's the need for power and control which robs otherwise well-meaning people of their ability to take responsibility for their mistakes, to apologize and to seek out new ways of doing things that might work better. 'Humble' and 'Boss' don't go together often enough.

Because I believe that foster and adoptive parents, in a child welfare case, are the folks who are reminded daily of where the true focus of the child welfare team's efforts must remain, I will continually advocate for the empowerment of this community. I know that the ability to successfully navigate the systems and power struggles we encounter is dependent on a few critical things. (1) You must have knowledge and expertise and you must be willing to share both. (2) You must continue to search always for more knowledge and expertise, and ask for help if you need it. (3) You must communicate effectively and you must do so in a respectful and professional way. (4) You must resolve your own feelings of inadequacy before you can effectively advocate for the needs of your children, and no one holds you back more than you allow them to. (5) At the end of the day, you must be satisfied with yourself and your efforts if you have done everything which is LEGITIMATELY within your power to do.

The most ridiculous part of the human need for power that boosts us up or shoots us down is that ultimately because we are mortal beings, we are grasping at straws that are not within our reach. We don't control the world around us. The one true power we have is to be calm enough and rational enough to think and to choose. That's what our power is. It is that we have a brain...the ability to reason. And when we are angry and frustrated and hurt and all of the other emotions that come with feeling powerless, we simply can't use our very good rational brains to choose well. (Which is the very same problem we are ALWAYS working with our kids to try to help them correct).

I wish I could conclude by 'calling out' one entity that abuses power or otherwise mucks things up for us all. But the reality is that we are all guilty of our parts in it. My hope in making you all take a minute to think about the role of power in child welfare is that it might challenge you toward some self-reflection. What is your 'need for power' causing you to get distracted from? Who is going to get hurt the next time you 'win'? And how can you be empowered, in a healthy way to do what is necessary to work with those around you to make the choices that will lead to positive outcomes for the children you care about? Sometimes it is necessary to take a stand and fight injustice. But sometimes it is necessary to swallow your pride, admit your mistakes, and make things right for the people who are counting on you.

I wish blessings for you and your families as we head into this season of thankfulness. May you be empowered to recognize every day as a new opportunity to work towards getting things right.

Sincerely,



Lori Ross

What: MFCAA Annual Christmas Party

When: December 10th

6:00pm - 8:00pm

Where: American Royal

1701 American Royal Ct

Kansas City, MO



**Please rsvp by calling (816) 350-0215 or by email to
Fran - fran@mfcaa.org or Kim - kim@mfcaa.org**

Santa Claus and his elves are coming to town!

**What is he bringing? Lots of fun activities and a turkey dinner
with all the trimmings. Have your picture taken with **Santa!****

**Mark your family activity calendars,
you don't want to miss this special night!**

**We have something special for the parents ~
a drawing for \$50 ~ \$100 Aldi Gift Certificates!**

**Don't miss the annual
MFCAA Christmas Party 2010**



Fostering Strategies for Change:

Children, Families, & their Communities



Up to 16 training
hours available

Conference Dates:

November 17 & 18, 2010

Conference Times
8:30am - 5:00pm

Kansas City Convention Center
301 West 13th Street • Kansas City, MO 64105

This **regional conference** is a unique collaboration focused upon improving and integrating services for children and families in the greater Kansas City region. Cornerstones of Care (COC), Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association (MFCAA), University of Missouri - Kansas City (UMKC) School of Social Work, and the Missouri Children's Division merged resources for three events to support a single regional conference.

Limited conference scholarships are available for foster/adoptive parents. To apply, please call 816-350-0215 to request scholarship.

Highlighted presentations include: Former foster youth panel, Open adoption panel, Advocacy 101, Adoption assistance, Child welfare trends: Keys to reunification, Understanding the sibling bond, Working with children, caregivers and communities when sexually reactive behavior has occurred, Teaching and protecting vs. punishing and forgiving, Foster parent Bill of Rights AND MANY MORE...

For registration and
more info, visit us at:

fosteringstrategiesforchangeconference.org/

Or call MFCAA at
816-350-0215

NOV	1	2	3	4	5 SPARKS Fall Fun Fest 	6	
	7	8	9 	10	11	12 	13
	14	15	16 	17 Fostering Strategies for Change: Conference	18 Fostering Strategies for Change: Conference	19 Dental Van 	20
	21	22	23 	24	25 Happy Thanksgiving 	26 MFCOA Offices Closed	27
	28	29	30 				



Clothes Closet
10a-2p



Food Pantry
9a-2p



First Friday Training
6:30p

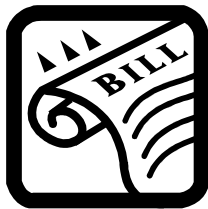


Third Friday Training—7p
(6:30p dinner RSVP)

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

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.

FOSTER PARENTS BILL OF RIGHTS



If you were not able to attend the “FOSTER PARENT BILL OF RIGHTS” training, you still have another chance this year.

There will be a training session at the Fostering Strategies for Change: Children, Families, & their Communities Conference ~ November 17th and 18th.

This training instructs on YOUR rights and how best to advocate for your children. It became LAW in 2008 and the sooner you understand it, the stronger, more informed you will be.



MFCOA thanks the Nancy Hodge Shy and Jay W. Jensen Run/Walk for their generous donation of \$5,000 to the Lawyers for Kids Fund. This annual walk honors the memories of Nancy Hodge Shy and Jay Jensen. Nancy and Jay were amazing people and champions of the effort to improve the lives of children in our community.

The Lawyers for Kids fund provides small scholarships to address the special need of foster and adopted children’s school and educational expenses, music lessons and sports registration for kids whose parents could not otherwise afford to pay for them.



Thank you to the Rotary Club of Independence for their donation of 33 tickets to the Mavericks Hockey game on October 22nd. The event was an East Independence Rotary fundraiser to benefit the eradication of Polio.

It was a first time event for many of our kids. Not only did the Mavericks win that evening but it was “Jersey Night” for kids! A great time was had by all!



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 Mary 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 816-350-0215). Childcare is provided during both training sessions, for children ages 3 and older.

ON-SITE TRAINING SCHEDULE:

November 5/6:30 - How to spot a good therapist

You need to find the best fit for your child and your family. Helping a child heal is one of the most important things we do as foster parents.

Presenter: Grey Endres— MSW,LCSW,LSCSW Gillis Director of Therapy Services

November 19/6:30 dinner (rsvp only if attending dinner (mary@mfcaa.org) Meeting 7p.

Self Harming Behaviors

Self harming behaviors are troubling and hard to manage. It is important to know the who, what, where, and especially the why of self harming behaviors. Learning about it helps us be more proactive instead of reactive.

Presenter: Peggy Chilson - LCSW,LSCSW - Westport Growth Center

“MFCAA does not discriminate in the provision of service, in employment, or in membership on the agency’s governing board on the basis of race, color, national origin, marital status, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, or ethnicity.”

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).

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.



Hello Families!

Would you like to earn a **total of \$210** and help us understand how to help children in foster care be resilient? Then the **SPARK Project** is the perfect opportunity for you!

SPARK (Studying Pathways to Adjustment and Resilience in Kids) is a team of researchers who have been conducting surveys with families in Jackson County to find out what really helps children in foster care cope and be resilient. We have had many wonderful families sign up...

BUT WE ALWAYS NEED MORE FAMILIES!!!!

Foster parents are experts on the children they care for—because of this, we want to hear from you how your children are doing and what they need to be resilient. We need foster parents and children who are at least 8 years old to complete our surveys. Both you and your child will receive payment for participating each time you complete surveys. We can do surveys during days, evenings, and weekends at a community location convenient to your home and your family’s schedule—whatever works best with your family.

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!

Special Thanks to the Following Major Donors for Their

EXTRAORDINARY GENEROSITY

The Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City has awarded MFCAA a one year grant co-sponsoring our Healing through Permanency-Adoption Resource project. This grant will enable MFCAA to serve additional adoptive and kinship families by increasing the numbers and types of support and training groups available. We will also be able to provide increased individual family advocacy and mentoring. The support, training and advocacy provided by this grant will help provide families the additional tools needed to provide children the safe, nurturing, forever homes they deserve. The Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City has been a long-time supporter of MFCAA's efforts to provide children who have experienced abuse and neglect the opportunity of a brighter future.

Foresters – Overland Branch The Foresters will not only be a sponsor of this year's Annual Conference but will also be a sponsor of our December 10th, Holiday Party. The Foresters will decorate and serve beverages at this years annual celebration.

WATCO Charities – Employees of Watco Manufacturing Company through their matching funds donation have once again made a generous contribution in support of the families of MFCAA. We are very grateful to our good friends for their continued support of our kids and their families.

AT&T Telecom Pioneers (Lewis & Clark Council) The Pioneers will once again be providing over 125 of our children with Christmas gifts this year. Also, for the fifth year, they will be providing parent scholarships for the Annual Conference.

Morgan Family Foundation - Our good friends at the Morgan Family Foundation will be a Partner Level sponsor at this year's Fostering Strategies for Change Annual Conference. Ten parents will be awarded scholarships because of their generosity.

Dreiseszun Family Foundation - The Dreiseszun Family has been a long time supporter of MFCAA's families and children. Their efforts have helped maintain our Family Resource Center, including the Food Pantry and Kid's Clothes Closet.



Many thanks go out to our good friends Dennis and Donna Haines for opening up their home to Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association and Drumm

Farm's first joint house party fundraiser. Over 50 guests enjoyed a wonderful evening celebrating a wonderful partnership. MFCAA and Drumm have been working together for over four years to provide brighter futures for the foster and adopted children of our community.



Many thanks to our AT&T Pioneer volunteers, Jan Parry, Debbie Harvey, Judee Wilkinson, Laura Hartung & Sandy Womack. The past several months they have worked with us on the mailing of our newsletter.

We also want to thank our long time newsletter volunteers Gary & Shirley Amerine.

Your help is greatly appreciated by our entire staff.