



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



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**September 2010**

*Thank You*

LTS Management Services  
Mom's Club of Independence  
Cockrell McIntosh  
UMB Financial Intelligence Unit  
Joseph Taylor-Kerns  
Clayton Taylor-Kerns

Eric Charles

Louis Gallo

Melanie Roberts

For your school supply donations. The children you helped really appreciate you.



Mark your Calendars  
December 10th 6:00p-8:00p  
American Royal  
Dinner, Santa, and activities  
for kids.

Reservations required by  
December 1st  
Call 816 350-0215 or email  
Fran-fran@mfcAA.org,  
Kim-kim@mfcAA.org

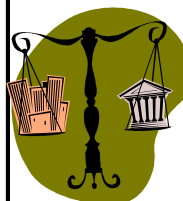
**FOSTER PARENT BILL OF RIGHTS**

We have 4 training dates scheduled for the fall:

<b>September 24, 2010</b>	<b>9 – 11 am</b>
<b>September 24, 2010</b>	<b>1 – 3 pm</b>
<b>October 22, 2010</b>	<b>9 – 11 am</b>
<b>October 22, 2010</b>	<b>1 – 3 pm</b>

The Children's Division staff has signed up for them but NO foster parents! This training is to teach YOUR rights to best advocate for your children. It became LAW in 2008 and the sooner you understand it, the stronger, more informed you will be.

Foster parents spoke loudly requesting that the trainings be moved to MFCAA, so we moved them all to the dining hall at MFCAA. Please sign up today for one of the 2 hour trainings by calling: Tammy Merriman at 889-2380.



When Foster Parents and Division Staff train jointly, it provides interesting discussions and great networking. Hope to see EVERY foster parent take advantage of this great opportunity!



## Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



### Letter From the Executive Director

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### MFCAA 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Honors Local Heroes

On Saturday, August 21, more than 200 friends and supporters gathered at the American Jazz Museum/Negro Leagues Baseball Museum for MFCAA's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala celebration. The event was a wonderful party celebrating MFCAA history and honoring some special supporters who have done remarkable things to make a difference for our kids.

### Paula Neese Award for Lifetime Achievement in Child Welfare

This year, as we planned the celebration of our first ten years of working hard to make a difference for Missouri's abused and neglected children and the families who care for them, we decided that we needed to find a way to honor those amazing individuals within our child welfare community whose life-long devotion to improving the lives of abused and neglected children serves as an inspiration and example to the rest of us.

When we were thinking of a name for such an honor, we easily came to the conclusion that we should name that award after our own child welfare leader, Paula Neese, who is retiring this year after a distinguished and selfless career of making a difference for our children.

I first met Paula Neese in the lobby of the federal courthouse here in Kansas City in the fall of 2005. That year the legislature had passed a bill which would eliminate post adoptive assistance for hundreds of Missouri children who had been adopted from foster care. At MFCAA such a change was simply unacceptable. So I worked with other advocates to organize the legal efforts of a team of attorneys from Missouri and New York. Those attorneys (including our other award recipients tonight: Shook, Hardy and Bacon) had filed a federal court lawsuit against the Governor and the state in order to stop this destructive bill from being implemented. Paula Neese was newly selected Missouri Children's Division Director just as that case was reaching the trial stage. (Talk about baptism by fire!) That day, in that lobby, Paula and I had our very first conversation about an article I was preparing to print in the MFCAA newsletter which was highly critical of the Children's Division's treatment of foster and adoptive parents. Needless to say, Paula must have known from day one that her relationship with MFCAA wouldn't be an easy one.

Still, Paula demonstrated that day, and has many times since, her commitment to ensuring that the Missouri Children's Division's practices would be constantly striving to be better for children, more inclusive of foster and adoptive families, and more responsive to our concerns. And, I don't think she was unhappy at all when her employers lost that law suit and those services for children were saved!

In fact, Paula has demonstrated her intense personal passion for the needs of children and families through a lifetime of service to kids. Paula started her career working with children and families in South Africa. For nearly a decade, she worked in schools, child welfare agencies and churches to improve the lives of children and families.



When she moved back to Missouri, Paula worked as a child and family therapist, providing individual and family counseling. She began her public child welfare career with the Missouri Children's Division in the 1980's. Paula worked as a children's service worker, a front line supervisor, County Director, and Children's Services Specialist. Paula then transferred to the Division's central office where she worked as a children's service worker, a front line supervisor, County Director, and Children's Services Specialist. Additionally, Paula served as a training coordinator for the Family Preservation Services in the Division's central office. Paula was appointed Northern Region Director in May of 2004, with administrative responsibility for 54 counties. And finally, she accepted the responsibility for steering the Missouri Children's Division for the majority of the past five years.

Paula has fulfilled her responsibilities to the children and families she's served with compassion, grace and determination. She uses her unique combination of quiet contemplation and enthusiastic and passionate debate to effect changes of opinion in even the staunchest of critics. Paula has demonstrated through her remarkable career, her guidance of those she has been charged with leading, and her personal example all of the benchmarks which define a child welfare hero. So, MFCAA was pleased to honor Paula Neese for her lifetime of achievement for abused and neglected children. And in the years to come we will honor other amazing advocates who share her qualities and her passion, with the Paula Neese Lifetime Achievement Award. Thank you, Paula for a lifetime of inspiration!

## **“Good Guys” Community Partner Award: Presented to the Shook, Hardy and Bacon Law Firm**

Shook, Hardy and Bacon has been a substantial partner in our efforts to improve the lives of abused and neglected children for many years. Even prior to the inception of MFCAA, Shook, Hardy and Bacon accepted the legal responsibility for serving as the plaintiffs local counsel in the G.L. vs. Stangler Consent Decree Case (through pro bono attorney Lori Burns-Bucklew) which resulted in substantial positive changes in the foster care system here in Jackson County, and dramatically impacted the work done by foster and adoptive families in caring for abused and neglected kids.

In 2005, when Missouri lawmakers sought to reduce supports available to children adopted from foster care, Shook, Hardy and Bacon devoted great resources to assist our families in filing and fighting a class action lawsuit on behalf of adopted children, which ultimately succeeded in saving the benefits for our children. With the proceeds from the state of Missouri for their legal fees, SHB chose to open a special fund to grant 'wishes' for children in foster and adoptive families. Through that program, Lawyers for Kids which is supervised internally by attorney Jim Muehlberger (a key participant in the class action lawsuit), SHB has assisted in providing wishes to dozens of special Missouri kids. It is inspiring to all who see the LFK display sitting in the lobby of the SHB building in downtown Kansas City today.

SHB pro-bono attorney, Lori Burns-Bucklew has been a steadfast supporter of MFCAA, devoting her time and expertise in educating our parent advocates, contributing to the development of family friendly policies and procedures, and making referrals to services she knew would help. Not only has she helped us with her legal expertise, but she has also taken the time to lead an MFCAA Girl Scout troop, informally mentored young women in care, and shared her personal resources to support the cause. Most recently, she's developed a training program for attorneys, parents, and volunteers geared at ensuring that the educational rights of children in foster care are protected. She's trained those classes here at MFCAA, and she's used her resources to connect families in need of this type of assistance with the skilled advocates she's created within the firm.

From secretaries and paralegals to attorneys, employees at all levels of SHB have adopted our agency as their own. Former SHB attorney, Teresa Laidacker, took on a prominent role in leadership with MFCAA in 2008, serving as the president of our Board of Directors. Teresa's vision and guidance have played a prominent part in ensuring the success of MFCAA's mission and vision for years. Secretary Kay Porter has organized clothing drives for MFCAA. SHB employees have generously assisted foster and adoptive families through our Christmas family gift adoption program as well as our annual back to school drive. Para-legal Kylene Young is currently organizing scrap-booking classes for MFCAA children and families.

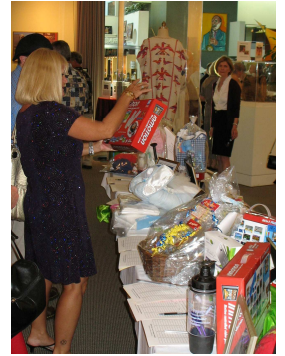
(continued from page 3)

Partner Gene Balloun has devoted his time and connections to ensuring that funding for the Lawyers for Kids program can be regenerated, through a project that matches deserving foster families with the legal representation they need to finalize the adoptions of children they've loved and cared for in their homes.

Without the support and assistance provided to MFCAA over the past ten years, there is no doubt that the agency would not be where it is today. Thank you, Shook, Hardy and Bacon, for making the lives of your community's most vulnerable children a priority and passion for your firm!

Sincerely

**Lori Ross**  
**Executive Director**



### MFCAA STAFF CHANGE

August 11, 2010 was a sad day at MFCAA. Tammy Spears, longtime MFCAA family advocate and trainer has resigned her position and worked her final day. Many of the family's who have been assisted by Tammy's training or advocacy over the years stopped by for a reception held at MFCAA to share stories about how she's impacted their families and their lives. Over the past several years, Tammy has been a vital member of the foster/adopt community. Her unique advocacy style, combining diplomacy and humor, has been very effective in assisting hundreds of children and families, and will not be replaced. MFCAA staff members wish Tammy the best of luck in her new role as 'stay at home Mom'.

Our training and advocacy programs continue without interruption despite this change. Family Advocate, Mary LeFebvre has moved to a full time position and is happy to assist. She can be contacted for questions about advocacy issues or training at [Mary@mfcaa.org](mailto:Mary@mfcaa.org). Lori Ross and Jennifer Johnson are also available to work with families needing help. If you have an interest in working with MFCAA as a family advocate in the future, please feel free to send your resume to [Lori@mfcaa.org](mailto:Lori@mfcaa.org).



Tammy Spears and Foster/Adopt parent Lori Gruetzmacher at Tammy's reception, August 11.

### Upcoming Foster Parent Training for Licensure S.T.A.R.S.

MFCAA is currently accepting foster parent applications for those who have a passion to foster children ages 12 and older, larger sibling groups (3 or more) or for children with special medical or developmental needs. The first training class is scheduled for September 25, 2010 from 9am-5pm. Please contact Jennifer Johnson at 350-0215 ext 17 or email [jenniferj@mfcaa.org](mailto:jenniferj@mfcaa.org) if interested.

## THE WHIZ, ZIP & ZAP IT!

What does this title have to do with the food we eat?

This program targets older children ages 10 and up and provides information on nutrition and food safety. It increases food exposure, enhances nutrition knowledge, and develops cooking skills by the preparation of two recipes per lesson using Nutra-Net's *Whiz, Zip, Zap* pictorial cookbook.

**October 1, 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm MFCAA Administration Bldg**

## WE NEED YOUR HELP

The Clothes Closet at MFCAA is an amazing resource for our community. However, we've been struggling lately with some unfortunate situations. Most recently, a whole collection of Halloween Costumes that were getting ready to be hung for our member's use, simply disappeared without a trace. At this point, we must reach out to the community and specifically ask for your help in collecting new or gently used children's costumes so that we can provide that resource to our members who may be struggling or may receive new placements just prior to the holiday. (All donations are tax deductible).

Our volunteers and our staff work hard to be sure that when families come to MFCAA seeking clothing for their children, we have a nice supply of gently used and new items from which they can select what they need to supplement their children's wardrobes. Per our guidelines, foster, adoptive and kinship parent MFCAA members can receive up to 7 outfits per child per season. While we understand that in this economy there are many people in the area who are struggling to meet the basic needs of their families, MFCAA is the only local agency which is solely devoted to the needs of abused and neglected children in this area. We cannot provide clothing assistance to our member's friends and extended family members.

In an effort to ensure that the MFCAA clothes closet succeeds in its mission of easing the financial burden on foster, adoptive and kinship parents, we are instituting some new guidelines for use. MFCAA members are welcome to use the clothes closet on Tuesdays and Fridays from 9AM to 2PM without prior appointment. On other weekdays, evenings, or Saturdays, appointments may be made by calling Becky at 350-0215.

Starting on September 1, 2010, prior to a first clothing closet visit, members must stop in at the front desk (above the clothes closet) and verify their active membership with the MFCAA staff member on duty there. MFCAA's membership form requires documentation of the family's status as a foster, adoptive or kinship provider. Once membership is entered and verified, the foster, adoptive or kinship parent will receive a ticket for their first visit to the MFCAA clothes closet. That ticket will be presented to Becky Hughes, our clothing closet director. Becky will provide new visitors with a short tour of the clothing closet and the guidelines for use of the clothing closet during that first visit.

Please remember to sign out on the clothing closet form for all items you've taken. We must account for donations received and distributed as a part of our non-profit designation. Abuse of the clothing closet's guidelines for use may result in the suspension of a member's ability to use this service.

We strive to be a welcoming and engaging agency. Our goal is to provide assistance to all of the amazing families who care for abused and neglected children in this area. Because of this important mission, we must work together to protect this resource for the children we all love. We appreciate your understanding and patience as we make this transition.

As always, if anyone has any concerns about this or any policy or operational issue with MFCAA, please feel free to call me, Lori Ross, at 350-0215, or email me at [Lori@mfcaa.org](mailto:Lori@mfcaa.org).



**Lori Ross**  
Executive Director

## 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!

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
<b>Sept</b>			1	2	3 	4
5	6 <b>MFCAA Office Closed</b>	7 	8	9	10 	11
12	13	14 	15	16	17  	18
19	20 <b>Dental Van</b>	21 	22	23	24 	25 <b>STARS Training 9 to 5</b>
26	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.**

**We invite you to join us November 17-18, 2010 at the Kansas City Convention Center**

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 and 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. The synergy of these three events merged into a single conference is easy to see:

GREATER KANSAS CITY ANNUAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE FAIR

MFCAA-UMKC SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK: CHILDREN AND THEIR MANY FAMILIES ANNUAL CONFERENCE

CORNERSTONES OF CARE ANNUAL ADOPTION FORUM

Mark your calendars! On November 17-18, the resources and focus of these previously separate events will be offered as a single regional conference that will bring families and service providers to the Kansas City Convention Center - 301 West 13th Street, Conference Room 2100, Kansas City, MO. Fostering Strategies for Change: Children, Families and their Communities will showcase diverse regional resources. Conference speakers, paper and workshops will present collaborative strategies for changing how systems and service providers identify and work with natural supports of families and their communities, as well as useful, innovative means to enhance family childbearing efforts.



# 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:**

### **September 3/6:30 - Aspergers/Autism/PPD**

These diagnoses inspire feelings of fear for many parents. How do I meet their needs? What services do they need? Who can do it? How do I manage the behaviors and more.

Presenter: Elizabeth Foster - licensed SLP/owner of Premier Therapy Group

### **September 17/6:30 dinner (rsvp only if attending dinner (mary@mfcaa.org) Meeting 7p.**

#### **Processing Grief and Loss**

This session will examine the grief cycle and how to help children move through it. Helpful interventions and lots of Q and A's.

Presenter: Solace House

"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.



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

**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).

## CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

MFCAA would like to thank those who made our August 21<sup>st</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Forever Families Gala a Magnificent success.

The success of this event was made possible by many people offering generous gifts of time, energy, and heart. These people include our volunteers, sponsors, and speakers, as well as auction donors and everyone who attended the event. The foster and adoptive families' ability to care for and nurture children is greatly enhanced by the community support of MFCAA's Resource Center and services. Children come into care through no fault of their own. These children need loving, supportive families to care for them. Together we are working towards the goal of providing every child a *Forever Family*.

Thanks and Kudos to the evenings amazing sponsors allowing all the proceeds from the ticket sales to go directly to the children and families of MFCAA.

### Constellation Level Sponsors

Krigel & Krigel, P.C.  
Keith & Connie Ashcraft  
McGonigle's Market  
Foresters- Overland Branch

### Star Level Sponsors

Becky & Dan Hughes  
Shook, Hardy, & Bacon, L.L.P.  
Linda McNicholas  
LTS Management Services  
Children's Mercy Hospital

### Sunshine Level Sponsors

Fern Truschke  
Larry & Mary LeFebvre  
Jack & Ruth Misiewicz  
Allen Lefko  
KCP&L  
Cara Thompson  
Patek and Associates  
Brad & Ginny Epsten  
Tom & Kathy Duke  
Boulevard Beer

### Special thanks to:

Our Emcee for the evening – Cary Hall  
Our Guest speaker -  
Representative Emanuel Cleaver  
Our auctioneer for the evening – Don Collet  
Our evening's music was presented by the  
Alan Voss Quartet  
Auction Coordinators -  
Foresters – Overland Park Branch



### Forever Families Gala-Auction Committee

Keith Ashcraft	Larry LeFebvre
Lisa Brummett	Linda McNicholas
Andrea Flinders	Fern Truschke
Nicole Grey	Laura Wische
Cara Hoover	Becky Hughes
Larry Kuhl	Teresa Laidacker
Lynda Lawrie	



With the assistance of the Brightside Alliance Members