

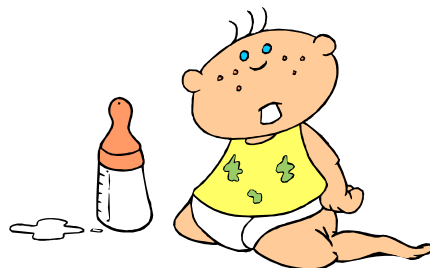


Midwest Foster Care and
Adoption Association
3210 S Lee's Summit Rd
Independence, MO
64055

April 2011



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



**MFCAA'S BABIES ARE IN NEED
OF DIAPERS sizes 1 to 4**

If you or your organization
would like to donate diapers,
please contact Kim at
(816) 350-0215 or kim@mfcaa.org



Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



Letter From the Executive Director

In this Issue:

President's Letter—Pg. 2 & 3

Training Topics—Pg. 4, 5, 6 & 7

Calendar & Reminders—Pg. 6 & 7

Ribs for Kids—Pg. 7

Helpful Hints—Respite —Pg. 8

Dear Friends,

Today alone I've had three Facebook experiences that have drawn me to the topic of fostering/adopting and social networking for this month's article. I got a call this morning from my young teen adopted daughter's bio grandma (my friend on fb and in real life) who wanted to share with me her concerns about a new profile picture that I hadn't seen yet (and am indeed not excited about), then I had an instant message (while I was working on my computer) from my young adult son who wanted to know if he'd left his bible at the house this past week and told me a little about his weekend, and finally, I got a message from the ex-step father of some kids I had in foster care ten+ years ago who had found me on Facebook because one of the kids (now an adult) was interested in re-connecting and wanted to see if I was interested as well.

A few years ago I signed up for a Facebook account mostly because I wanted to see what the big deal was. I had young teenagers at the time (and some young adults as well). The grown kids were already on Facebook, and my younger kids wanted to be. I figured that if they were all going to be out there doing this social network thing, the best thing I could do would be to join them. It also occurred to me that I might be able to re-connect with extended family who I don't see often. I was excited about the ability to share pictures and information, and to learn more about their families and their lives while I was at it.

My grown kids weren't particularly excited about mom getting a Facebook page. They all indicated that they thought I was much too old to be on Facebook, and I'm pretty sure some of them edited their pictures or posts before they accepted my 'friend requests'. But eventually they all did add me as a 'friend' and soon their significant others did as well. Many of their old friends also added me, and I was surprised to find that some of my own friends were Facebook users too.

I tried playing the games a little bit, but found that for me those were simply time killers and time is not something I have an abundance of, so I swore those off. But over time I found more and more folks I knew on Facebook (or they found me). I've reconnected with my far away family, with classmates from high-school and elementary school, and most interestingly with former foster kids (now grown) who've shared their lives with me at some point in the past.

Checking in on my kids' pages has provided me with a valuable insight into what they are thinking, what and who matters to them, and what their friends are up to. Without becoming a 'creeper' (slang for a Facebook stalker who spends too much time 'creeping' around on other people's pages), I've been able to feel a little more connected to my adult kids, and a little more on top of the social world of my teens. I don't always comment on what I see, but I do stick it away in my mind and use it as the valuable data that it is.

We all know that Facebook and other forms of social networking can have a tremendous negative effect as well. We've seen that people have used social networking to become cyber-bullies, to seriously stalk and intimidate others in a threatening or sexual way, and to use the words people write or the pictures they post to hurt them in the real world of school or work. It is because of these basic concerns, that exist for any user of social networking, that there are courses for parents on how to teach their children internet safety. It is also because of these concerns that many parents 'forbid' their children from using these sites or having an account.

But the reality is that young people access these sites from their computers at school, at other people's homes, on their cell phones, at the library, and pretty much anywhere that the technology allows. It's Parenting 101 which teaches us not to forbid or threaten anything we can't follow through on. You can't keep your kids from the internet. So my technique, "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" seems to be the wisest approach.

The next thing to keep in mind is that anyone can create a free email account on any of a number of free email forums. Yahoo, for example, will provide an email account to anyone. An email account is all that is needed for your child to establish a Facebook page. And there is no requirement that your child sign up for a Facebook page using his or her own name. So, it is wise to 'friend' some of your child's friends as well as your child. This will allow you to view who else the friend is connected to (just in case your child has a second page he/she doesn't want you to know about).

Depending on your openness to contact with birth family members, the issue of re-connection becomes substantially more complicated for

foster and adopted kids and their parents. Twenty years ago you could adopt a child from foster care and if you didn't live in the same neighborhood you could be fairly easily assured that it would be difficult for any member of that child's birth family to establish contact with the child without your knowledge and consent.

That simply isn't the case anymore.

The truth is that birth parents who've had their children removed for abuse or neglect, birth parents who've placed their children for adoption privately, birth siblings separated by the foster care system, extended family relatives, and more are all out there searching for and finding these children with or without your knowledge and consent.

Remember the foster care classes about experiencing a hotline allegation? Remember the trainers telling you "it's not an 'if' it's a 'when'." The same is true in this arena. Your children WILL have contact with their birth families just as soon as they are developmentally old enough to set up an email account and Facebook (or other social networking) page.

Basic internet safety tells us to teach our children about safety and privacy settings. These settings might help prevent your child from becoming the victim of an unknown pedophile. But the reality is that most of our children know who their birth parents are. While we may feel that those folks are dangerous strangers, they are not perceived as dangerous strangers by their children. The conflicted feelings of love and loss that their children feel for them will be irresistible when they are approached with a 'friend request'.

What I'm telling you is that you CAN NOT prevent your children from this experience. It's impossible unless you isolate your entire family from the world we live in. So what you need to do is to challenge yourself to become adept at navigating the parenting challenges that this new connectivity presents to us.

Here are some tips I can offer from my own personal experiences as an adoptive and foster mom:

Be honest with your child about his/her birth family and the situations that those birth family members find themselves in. Don't do this in a demeaning way, but rather provide the information as objectively as possible and share with your child the reasons why you worry about the contact that child may have with that birth family member (if there are reasons).

Demonstrate empathy rather than judgment toward the birth family. Judgment will only succeed in alienating your child from YOU.

If your child has birth family members who are safe and appropriate, get to know those people and become a friend (extended family member) to them as well. Those folks may have a desire to help you keep your child safe from further trauma and harm.

Let your younger teen child know that it is possible that his/her birth family may seek him out (as he embarks into the world of social networking) and plan with him how to handle any potential friend requests. (If you have prepared your child it is possible that he may trust you enough to come to you when this happens).

Fight the urge to believe that the birth family is the enemy. They do not have the singular goal of disrupting your adoption or harming your child's affection for you. If your child's birth parent finds your child, send them a friend request yourself and start a conversation via a message with regard to how much you have in common in terms of your love for and hopes for the child.

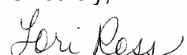
DON'T take your child's interest in his/her birth family as a rejection of you or your family. This is not about you. It's about your child. As you will remember from your foster/adopt classes, who your child is is INEXTRICABLY woven into the people from who he/she has come. The best thing you can do as a loving parent is to walk hand in hand with your child through any journey of self-discovery.

Let your child know that there is no problem so big that you can't handle it. And let your child know that you will be there to help whenever your child needs you. In other words, "No matter what STUPID thing you do, I will still love you and I will still be your parent". Then mean what you say. This isn't blanket permission to do whatever the child wants, but it is the kind of unconditional love which will bring the child to you for help when/if the problem becomes more than she thinks she can handle on her own.

Use your resources for wisdom and support as you embark on this uncharted journey. Talk to other foster/adoptive parents about your experiences and if you mess up, go back and try again to do better. Like our parents before us, we face parenting challenges that are new to our generation. Together, we too, shall overcome.

As always if you have any feedback or tips you'd like to share with the foster/adopt community, please feel free to email me, start a discussion on our MFCAA Facebook page, or otherwise connect with us virtually or in the real world. You can find all the information you need at www.mfcaa.org.

Sincerely,



Lori Ross

MFCAA TRAINING SCHEDULE 2011

Listed are a few of our training topics for this year in the hopes you will be able to plan ahead and attend those you really need. As always, we hope you are can attend all sessions. It is a great opportunity to visit with other foster parents and share information. If you have any questions, please call me, Mary LeFebvre on 816 350-0215 or email mary@mfcaa.org. You can view the complete list on our website, mfcaa.org click on MFCAA members, then Programs, then Training & Support, then click on Training.



April 1st - Understanding the Sibling Bond: What it is and What it isn't.

Separating siblings in foster care or through adoption adds to children's emotional loss and trauma. Studies have shown that even babies experience depression when separated from their brothers and sisters. Children who have lived together in families with trauma often have an even stronger bond and connection, as it has been through these ties that they have survived their less than optimal or abusive family life. Yet, the sibling bond and the research surrounding this bond is very often misunderstood. This workshop presents the significance of the sibling bond, as well as how to assess it for appropriate placement recommendations.

Presenter: Susan Peach, MSW, LCSW, Lifeworks Family Treatment Group

April 15th - Kansas City Regional Office – What is it? Who needs it? When?

Many foster parents come into this work without realizing some of the very important resources in our community. Kansas City Regional Office is one of those at the top of the list. They provide *mental health services* for many of our children and continue the service through their adulthood. We will hear what services are provided, how they determine what is needed, when to access the services and much more.

Presenter: Chuck Wheeler, Supervisor KCRO

May 6th - Successful Strategies for Managing Finances

As we began this adventure of foster care/adoption, we had to be financially stable to be "invited in". As time went on, many families found themselves in unfamiliar territory...living paycheck to paycheck. We are going to hear strategies we can put in place now so that when a crisis happens (like 9/16/10 when the State changed over their payment system and many families did not receive a check) we can stay calm and teach our children, by example, to handle crisis situations with ease.

Presenter: Jack Misiewicz, Vice President, UMB Financial Corporation

May 20th - Sexually Acting Out

Even when we have requested taking children that have no sexual abuse history, the reality is...sometimes it hasn't been disclosed yet. To keep children from experiencing additional trauma by moving them, it is important to learn to manage the behaviors and teach appropriate boundaries. Statistics tell us that 75% to 95% of the children in care have experienced sexual abuse, so it is very important that we all learn to recognize the signs and know when and how to protect all members of your family.

Presenter: Michael Boniello, LSCSW, LCSW

June 3rd - Art can be Therapeutic!

This summer when you want to find projects and other creative activities to do with your children, you can include some that are therapeutic to teach at home. Kealey is an art therapist and she is going to teach us how to do therapeutic activities with our children, which will also make healing fun!

Presenter: Kealey Williams, Lifeworks Therapy Group

June 17th - How the brain is effected in traumatized children

Dr. Bruce Perry spoke in St. Louis last fall to a group of therapists, doctors and other professionals on how the brain is affected by trauma beginning at the earliest stages of life. Those that attended found this information very pertinent to the work we do with foster/adopt children whom we work with every day. There are known strategies that will help heal the brain if done correctly and consistently. Come learn new ways to help your children!

Presenter: Regina Staves, Ph.D., Avila University

July 1st NO TRAINING ... Happy Birthday America!

July 15th - Autism: Indicators and Strategies

Many of our children have the diagnosis of Autism or something along the spectrum of this disorder. Learning to manage our children is one thing, but working to improve their ultimate outcome sometimes leaves us wondering "what next?" Come hear what the experts can offer on ways we can help our children maintain their behaviors while continuing to grow.

Presenter: Melinda Vizcarra, autism consultant, Outcomes, Inc.

August 5th - Needing and Writing IEP's Foster parents with a Jackson County CD FDS who attend will be exempt from completion of the CD-114 prior to training.

Here we go...another acronym! If you're new to the foster care world...this stands for Individual Education Plan. There is certain criteria that your child needs to meet before an IEP can be done. We find quite a few of our children in care need the extra structure that it provides in the school setting. Sue is the Educational Advocate for the Children's Division and is very knowledgeable on the subject. She will let you know what you need to do to be the best advocate possible for your children.





















- Protect and nurture
- Meeting the developmental delays of the child
- Forming connections that will last a lifetime.

Presenter: Sue Hines, Education Advocate, Children's Division

August 19th Raising Teens!!!

We have a panel of experts who have either worked therapeutically with teenagers or parents that have been through the teen years with several children and came out alive!!! Obviously they are very strong people! One of the hardest jobs you will do is parenting teenagers with a history of abuse and neglect. There are exceptions to every rule, but very few in this area. Come listen to the panel, ask your questions, and build all the strength you can to continue this important work .

Presenters: Joe Beck, Clinical Psychologist and a panel of parents TBA

Apr					1  	2 BIST
3	4	5  	6	7	8  	9
10	11	12  	13	14	15   	16
17	18 Taxes Due	19  	20	21	22  	23
24 Easter	25	26  	27	28	29   	30



Clothes Closet
9a-2p



Food Pantry
9a



First and Third Friday
Training 6:30p—8:30p



See Note Below



Dental Van

*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.

September 2nd Hair and Skin Care

School started!!! Get your child ready to feel like a million bucks when they go to school with some fancy new hair do's because you have learned how to care for it. No more dry flakes of skin on the little legs and arms of your children because you have taken the time to figure out just how to maintain healthy skin on them. How much cream? Any special creams? Do they even need it? How often do they bathe? These are all things you will learn about when attending this training.

Presenter: Liz Ross and fellow Cosmetologists: Rachel Williams, Dominique Mitchell and Angie Moon

September 16th Don't Poke the Bear!

When tempers are flaring, you're in the middle of a crisis because your child is having a meltdown and you are tired...what can you do to de-escalate the situation? Grey tells us not to poke the bear! In the most heated moments, small reminders like that will help you stay in control. Come hear some great strategies you can use to get through those times and be able to find positive outcomes for these children you are working with. Step up to the plate, be the professional parent the children need and life will get better when they learn to de-escalate the correct way.

Presenter: Grey Endres, Clinical Director – Gillis



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 who are potty trained.

ON-SITE TRAINING SCHEDULE:

April 1 - 6:30p-8:30p

Understanding the Sibling Bond: What it is and What it isn't. - This workshop presents the significance of the sibling bond, as well as how to assess it for appropriate placement recommendations.

April 15 - 6:30p-8:30p

Kansas City Regional Office – What is it? Who needs it? When? - Hear what services are provided, how they determine what is needed, when to access the services and much more.

"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. Clothing Closet hours are 9am-2pm on Tuesdays and Fridays.

MFCAA's Food Pantry provides basic food items to all Members, and is open Tuesday and Friday at 9am. Call 816-350-0215 for an appointment.



Ribs For Kids

April 30th

We need volunteers to help through the day.

Please call the office at 816-350-0215 or email leaann@mfcaa.org if you can help.

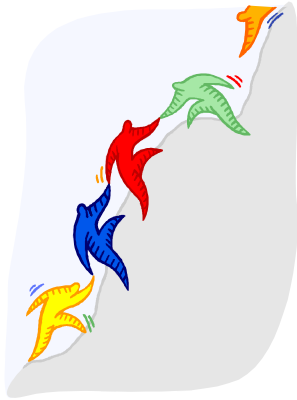
It is always a fun day!

7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.,
McGonigle's Market, 1307 W. 79th Street, K.C., MO

Ribs for Kids is a benefit supporting the families of **Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association** works to provide children who have experienced abuse and neglect the opportunity to have a stable, caring and nurturing family.

Ribs for Kids spring celebration provides a caring community an opportunity to make a genuine difference in the lives of children who have experienced abuse, neglect or abandonment. When you purchase racks of delicious baby back ribs on April 30th, McGonigle's will donate \$5 per rack to the Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association.

Join the celebration, make a difference in the lives of some pretty terrific kids, and enjoy Kansas City's finest BBQ!



HELPFUL HINTS for RESPITE PROVIDERS

***Have you ever provided respite?
Have you ever had trouble getting paid?***

Before agreeing to provide respite, here is a helpful list of questions for respite providers to ask:

1. Is the child an emergency placement?

The Children's Division will **not** pay respite if a child is placed as an emergency placement.

2. Does the child have respite units left to use?

Every child in care is allotted 12 units of respite per year (the date begins when the child placed in the foster home)

Respite units are re-set each time a child has a new placement

One unit = 12-24 hours

3. Is the child adopted?

If the child using respite is adopted, the adoptive parent pays the respite provider directly. The adoptive parent submits for reimbursement to the adoptive subsidy worker.

4. Does this child have respite as a service?

Not all adopted children have respite included in their subsidy as a service. Or, if not, are the adoptive parents prepared to pay for this service out of pocket and not get reimbursed?

5. Did you complete the respite invoice form correctly?

The form must be *completely* filled out to receive reimbursement for services rendered.

It is imperative that the DATE AND TIME the respite began and ended be completed. If this information is not included on the form, respite will not be paid.

The form **MUST BE** signed by **BOTH** the foster parent and the respite provider.

6. How quickly did you turn in the respite payment invoice form?

No need to say more. The form should be turned in immediately to help ensure payment is not held up due to a timeliness issue.

MFCAA has met with Children's Division to uncover why it is difficult for respite to be paid in a timely manner. Does paperwork get lost on a desk at times? Absolutely - but not having respite paid can be frustrating for all involved including well-intentioned case managers and supervisors. It is important to remember that even if Jackson County Children's Division agrees to payment, it can be rejected for payment by Jeff City based on the factors listed above. We know you provide respite, not for the money it pays, but to provide a needed break to foster parent colleagues and children alike. It is a nice perk, at least, to have some food expenses reimbursed! Please do your due diligence, asking all the above questions, before agreeing to provide respite to help increase your chances of receiving reimbursement.

