



Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



Letter From the President & CEO

Dear Friends,

This is article two in a three part series on inadequate foster care rates in Missouri. Last month I spent some time talking about negative public perceptions about the motivations of foster parents and the reality of the inadequate actual foster care maintenance amounts in Missouri, which clearly conflicts with that generalized public perception. This month I'm going to spend a little time talking about how Missouri compares within the Midwest, and what we, at MFCAA, and others have done to address this injustice.

The Hunter College School of Social Work published a paper in June of 2008 for the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning. In that paper, their researchers sought and then compared current foster care rates for all of the fifty states. The results follow:

Missouri is bordered by 7 states, Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Tennessee. Of those 7 states, six offer foster care rates which are \$80-\$300 per month higher than what Missouri provides. Nebraska, the one bordering state which appears to be worse than Missouri in terms of reimbursement rates (coming in at \$30/month less than Missouri's basic rate), offers additional payments which are based on any special needs a child in care may demonstrate. Their rates in actuality, factoring those specialized incentive payments, fall in line with Missouri's other surrounding states, leaving us behind in the dust.

When the MARC study (Hitting the MARC, Establishing Foster Care Minimum Adequate Rates for Children) was released in October 2007, for the first time, foster care advocates, myself included, had in their hands a document that calculated the real costs of caring for a child in foster care in the United States. The analysis of the data in the MARC study showed that the rates of support for children in foster care are far below what is needed to provide basic care for these children in nearly every state in the nation. On average, foster care rates must be raised by 36% in order to reach the Minimum Adequate Rates for Children calculated in the project. Missouri was identified in the MARC study as one of five states which must raise its rates more than double in order to reach that standard, holding a disgraceful place as the third lowest reimbursing state in the United States.

The MARC study was calculated by analyzing consumer expenditure data reflecting the costs of caring for a child; identifying and accounting for additional costs particular to children in foster care; and applying a geographic cost-of-living adjustment. The cost analysis included adequate funds to meet a child's basic physical needs and cover the costs of 'normalizing' childhood activities, such as after-school sports and arts programs, which are particularly important for children who have been traumatized or isolated by their experiences of abuse and neglect and placement in foster care.

The MARC study is a tool which is superior to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates of costs of raising children because the USDA includes in its annual analysis, costs which are not typically part of a foster care rate, and they exclude costs which are particular to the care of foster children. The costs calculated in the MARC do not include transportation costs, or child care costs, which the study points out, should be paid to the foster parents based on their actual expenses for these two categories. The 2007 MARC study indicated that a foster parent caring for an 11 year-old Missouri child should be reimbursed \$719/month in order to meet that child's basic needs adequately. Missouri's current rate of reimbursement for that 11 year-old child is \$322/month. This data tells us that Missouri foster parents are required to reach into their pockets to subsidize more than half of the costs of caring for each child placed into their homes. If the child has specialized needs, the amount subsidized increases along with those needs.

Using the newly released MARC study as an impetus for change, MFCAA worked with the Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies (MCCA), the Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition of St. Louis, and the Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association (the other MFCAA based in southern Missouri) to host a Rally at the State Capitol on April 14, 2008. This Rally, written about in the newsletter linked here, <http://www.mfcaa.org/img/files/newsletters/2008/March08MFCAANewsletter.pdf>, brought together foster parents from across the state to ask for a legislative plan and commitment to work toward raising rates to an adequate level. A small increase in that 2008 legislative session was the last increase that Missouri's foster children have received.

As a vocal foster care and adoption advocate, for several years, I have met quarterly in Jefferson City with the Children's Division Director (in turn those were: Fred Simmens, Paula Neese and Candy Shively). Foster care rates discussions have been held on multiple occasions during

those years. And while I have never left with a commitment to work toward increased rates, I have always been assured that the Children's Division is aware of the need for increased rates.

As the economy took a dramatic turn for the worse a few years ago, some of the 'money' discussions turned away from increasing rates to protecting the low rate that currently exists from potential unimaginably harmful cuts. To their credit, the CD was a true partner in the effort to be sure that the disparity between what is paid and the costs of care did not worsen during the leanest times in state government.

At my invitation, Joe Kroll, Executive Director of the North American Council on Adoptable Children has been to Missouri to meet with myself and the CD director twice with regard to federal dollars (adoption incentive and Maintenance of Effort dollars tied into the Fostering Connections to Success act, which can be used to increase foster care maintenance/adoption subsidy). He met with Paula Neese, while she was in the position and within the last six months he's met with Candy Shively. This national expert brought not only the desire to see Missouri foster parents adequately reimbursed, but he brought information on how other states have funded their foster care and adoption subsidy programs and substantial information on additional federal dollars for the state.

Approximately twice per year, I have met with DSS Assistant Director, Brian Kinkade, to discuss funding decisions and foster care rates (among other things). Frequently the Department of Social Services budget folks have brought back information to the Kansas City Child Abuse Roundtable and to other advocacy organizations that I have worked with over the years on this topic. Like the CD directors before him, Mr. Kinkade has acknowledged the low rate in Missouri, but to this date we have not been able to secure a 'plan' to move the rates to an acceptable and adequate level.

Each year, MFCOA posts a list of Legislative Priorities which highlight the protection of, or increase necessary for, foster care maintenance/adoption subsidy. These priorities are worked on by our pro-bono lobbyist (Patek and Associates) each year along with the review of proposed legislation and education of legislators about foster care issues each year. We believe these efforts, along with the efforts of other child advocates and sympathetic CD staff, have resulted in the protection of the current rates during the recession.

Additionally, I attend and participate in quarterly meetings of the Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board, in which funding decisions and foster care rates are discussed frequently. As recently as January of 2011, this board submitted the following position statement to the Children's Division, "The Missouri State Foster Care & Adoption Advisory Board continues to support the MARC study of 2007 recommendations for increasing maintenance reimbursement to adequate levels for supporting the children in foster and adoptive families."

Despite the slow economic recovery, we strongly believe that it is time for some significant progress in this area. The abused and neglected children of Missouri deserve to be provided for at an adequate level. The families caring for them have weathered the economic recession just like everyone else out there and they have done so shouldering the added financial burden of the state of Missouri by subsidizing the state's responsibility to provide care to the children the state removes. Some of Missouri's incredible foster families, in the Joplin area, have even continued to meet that challenge despite personal and financial loss that is incomprehensible to the rest of us.

Missouri must act to increase foster care rates and to address the needs of children who have been abused and neglected. In the next article in our series on increasing foster care rates, we'll share information with you on how we plan to work with you over the next year to make this a reality for our kids.

Sincerely,



Lori

Joplin Foster and Adoptive Families Picnic July 17, 2011



Lori Ross delivers a car, a gift from a generous Kansas City donor, to tornado survivor Hannah and her new guardians, Josh and Amy. Hannah's adoptive mom was killed in the tornado.



Six miles of destruction



Lori Ross chats with Joplin foster parents, Sue and Beau about starting a support group in the area.



No words....



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August 2011



Recipe of the Month













Black Bean Sloppy Joes

From lotsofkids.com

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 1/3 cup water
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1/4 cup quick-cooking oatmeal
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1/2 tbsp yellow mustard
- 1 tsp honey
- 1 tsp chili powder

Place onion and pepper in saucepan with water. Cook, stirring frequently until the vegetables soften, about 5 minutes.
Mash beans with a bean or potato masher, leaving mixture a little chunky; do not puree.
Add the beans and remaining ingredients to the saucepan and cook over low heat until warmed through, about 5 minutes.

This column is funded by The Junior Service League of Independence, Missouri

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
Aug	1	2 	3	4 	5 	6
7	8	9 	10	11 	12 Picnic and Pool Party	13
14	15 	16 	17	18 	19 	20 Annual Gala
21	22	23 	24	25 	26	27
28	29	30 				



Clothes Closet
9a-2p



Food Pantry
9a



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



Dental Van *For Dental Van
Appointments: Dora Jenkins
816-889-2071

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.

Forever Families Gala and Auction
Reduced cost tickets for family and friends

The MFCAA annual **Forever Families** fundraising Gala and Auction is Saturday, August 20th from 6pm until 9pm, at the InterContinental Hotel on the Country Club Plaza. Kansas City Mayor, Sly James will provide opening remarks and featured guest speaker, Nathan Ross will inspire our audience with his personal story of hope and resilience following his experience of childhood abuse in one of the highest profile cases in the Kansas City metro area. This year's auction features the 'Small Hands' collection of children's art. Information, including online registration, is posted on our website www.mfcaa.org. **MFCAA is offering a limited number of reduced cost tickets (\$50)** to our members, your friends, family, and those who may enjoy an introduction to the many services and programs provided to families who care for children who have experienced abuse and neglect.

You can help us make this year's effort even more successful! We are seeking additional auction items for the event and will follow-up with potential donors or sponsorship contacts you may offer. Please contact Danielle or Lois at 350-0215 for more information.



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:

Aug 5th - Needing and Writing IEP's - Sue Hines, Education Advocate, Children's Division

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.

Aug 19th - Raising Teens!!! - Joe Beck, Clinical Psychologist and a panel of parents

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 .

“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.”

Hair Pact Adopts Family

Hair Pact a salon located at 701 E 23rd Street has adopted a MFCAA family to help with Back to School supplies. Ciara Henry, the owner of Hair Pact, contact MFCAA earlier this summer asking if her salon could adopt a family to help with needs they have while helping children in so much need. Randomly picked from the membership, Hair Pact has collected items from their patrons and staff to help this wonderful family. Thank you Hair Pact! The salon is also holding a Back to School Bash on Aug 13th with 50% off children's haircuts, as well as school supplies for all customers. For more information on this event, please call the salon at 816-461 PACT.

Drumm Farm Golf Club is helping our children prepare to learn!

Donate School Supplies and receive a Round of Golf FREE!

Donate \$20 of school supplies to the MFCAA school supply drive (or send cash and we will purchase supplies) and you will receive a 2 for 1 green fees certificate to Drumm Farm Golf Club. Receive 1 free greens fee with purchase of 1 regular priced green fee. Cart rental required. Transferable to your favorite golfer. Valid anytime Mon-Fri, and after 11am on weekends.

Reminder:

The Food Pantry and Clothing Closet are now open on Tuesdays and Thursdays.



We are turning to our foster community for help!

MFCAA is interested in recruiting families who are currently underrepresented in the foster family population including those who are African American, Latino or LGTB. We specifically want to find families who are interested in sibling groups, older youth and youth with special behavioral and medical needs. If you know of folks who are interested in fostering or adopting, please ask them to call MFCAA at 350-0215 and ask for Jennifer Johnson.



Jackson County families-sign up for the SPARK Project!

We at the SPARK Project are continuing to work with fostering families to find out what helps children in foster care be resilient. To do this, we are asking parents and children to answer survey questions at a time and location that is convenient for their families (nights and weekends are totally fine, and we can provide child-care for your other children too!!).

Also, remember that parents AND children earn gift cards for each time they participate!!!

If you would like more information or you'd like to sign up, please call us at (913) 897-8454 or send us an email at sparkproject@ku.edu

Congratulations!

Michelle Williams has won our first photo contest. Here is what she had to say about her new family.

"I was 24 years old when I became a single foster parent.

My parents have been foster parents for a private organization since I was 12 (and still are), fostering newborns that are being placed for adoption.

I have had a total of 16 foster children in my home, and still remain in very close contact with one sibling group that has been reunified.

My boys came to me when Anthony was 8, and Hosea was 8 months old. After it was determined that reunification would not be successful, we began the adoption proceedings. Everything was finalized on May 26th.

I almost can't remember or imagine what life was like before these boys. Its like they've always been here. To me there was never a question on whether or not I wanted to adopt them. It was a yes before they could get the question out of their mouth (the caseworker). They have a new HUGE extended family and church family that really cherish them. Anthony and I have similar birthmarks, and he says that's because it was God's plan all along to put us together.

Anthony is extremely creative, artistic and sensitive. He really amazes people with his talents and abilities. Hosea is silly, mischievous, and wraps people up with his larger than life personality.

My whole life, since childhood, I've always known I was going to adopt children. I just didn't know when, or how, or WHO. But God worked that all out in His perfect way."

