



Midwest Foster Care and
Adoption Association
3210 S Lee's Summit Rd
Independence, MO
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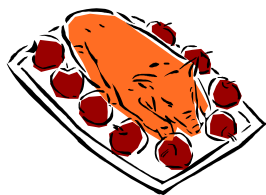
February 2011

**Ribs For Kids
Has a New Date!**

Mark Your Calendars
April 30th !!!!!!!!!!!

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

**Our 8th annual
Ribs for Kids Celebration has
been moved forward this year.
So Save This Date!**



FOSTER PARENTS

MFCAA is currently accepting foster parent applications. especially 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. If you know of anyone interested please give them the contact information below. They can also go to our website www.mfcaa.org.

Please contact Jennifer Johnson at 350-0215 ext 24 or by email jenniferj@mfcaa.org.



Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



Letter From the Executive Director

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Dear Friends,

As I work daily with families I often find myself noticing a theme that people's issues and concerns have in common. This month I've been inspired to think about the topic of 'letting go'. I don't remember reading about this or even talking about this much except as concerns the process of grieving, which is thoroughly covered in an academic way in our foster/adoptive parent pre-service training. We all know the 'pathway through the grieving process' or the 'stages of grief'.

But the general idea of 'letting go' is clearly on the forefront of people's minds when they think about foster care, because, as I'm sure you all know, one of the first things I'm always told when I meet someone new is "I could never do what you do. I'd fall in love with the kids and I'd never be able to let them go." The need to 'let them go' is a reason many people cite for not making the decision to get involved personally in foster care.

The concept of 'letting go' is part and parcel of every bit of the foster and adoptive parent's experience. We let go of our privacy, our sense of control of our own family and homes, our fantasy that everyone who works in child welfare is here for the same reasons we are, our similar fantasy that we can do something magical through the gift of our love that will help heal the broken hearts in the hurting kids who come to our homes.

Letting go is so ingrained into the fostering experience, that I'm pretty sure most of the folks who work in and around foster care simply overlook it as something that might need to be addressed and well-understood. Within the last few months I've worked with a family who struggled to say goodbye to kids who have been theirs, as if they were their own (as we teach them in STARS), for more than a year. This family was not confused about their role. They knew those kids were not theirs forever. This was especially difficult because they were absolutely convinced that the kids were going back home to a situation that wasn't changed from the situation in which they'd come into care to begin with, a situation that had been life-threatening to the children. Because they made their concerns known, there was an automatic reaction within the child welfare system in which their concerns were discounted and the system partners jumped to the assumption that all this fuss was REALLY about this family's desire to 'keep' children who weren't theirs. This family was viewed as unusually attached, rather than legitimately concerned.

In other situations I'm working on, families have adopted children with significant behavioral and mental health issues. These issues include doing yucky stuff with feces, sexually perpetrating on younger kids, stealing, lying including false allegations of abuse, etc... Again, these are not small problems. These families, who get the privilege of keeping their kids forever (some even had to fight the system for that privilege), continue to have to 'let go'. They've had to let go of the mistaken belief that their commitment to providing their children with love, nurture, support, patience, etc... will eventually make those problems get better. For some of them, they've had to come to some internal understanding that they are simply not going to 'fix' these kids. Their hopes and dreams for these kids' positive futures are not likely to ever be realized. Instead they find themselves hoping that maybe someday they'll be able to work through the sense of failure that committed parents feel when their kids reject all that they try to teach (either because they choose to, or because they are so damaged that they just can't take it in).

These same parents have made lifetime commitments to their children. In letting go of the hope that their kids will get much better, they likewise have to let go of the hope that they will have a 'normal' family ever again. They have to embrace a new 'normal' that includes drama, secondary or primary trauma on a regular basis, a parenting style that is completely different from what they'd like to do for their kids, etc... Or, they have to become re-engaged with this cumbersome and intrusive system (after that was a closed chapter in their lives) because they need the system to help fund the kind of care their kids need. And with that motivation, at least two of the families I'm working with are actually having to 'let go' of their legal custody of their children, and therefore their ability to 'control' the treatment their children receive, in the process.

Letting go is almost always painful. To let something or someone go, we must have initially been connected in some significant way. When the letting go involves a child you have loved as your own, the pain is indescribable. I still think about "M" who left my home almost a decade ago. I think about the fact that he's going to turn 12 next month, and I wonder about what his life is like now. I worry that it is probably not what I'd want it to be. I know his birth mother loves him, but that doesn't diminish the very real other factors that impact his life and his future. If "M" came back into foster care today, he wouldn't know who I was. But that doesn't matter at all. Because "M" is my son in my heart and he always will be, and I'd take him back in a heartbeat no matter what his current issues may be. Does that make me weird, or pathological? Am I 'too attached'?

Similarly, when the "B" sibling group left my home several years ago my emotions were quite mixed. Unlike "M" I was fully supportive of this group's transition back to their birth mother. While I still had concerns about the quality of life they might have, these children's mother had worked so hard to get them back. They were well-loved. And, in reality, it was a huge relief for them to go home in many ways. The drama that accompanies five dysfunctional siblings into a family is difficult to imagine unless you've lived it. Is it wrong that I felt both sadness and relief together when they left? Clearly I still think about those "B" kids and wonder where they are and how they are doing now. Did I love them less because it was harder to care for them? Was I not 'attached enough'?

As I get older and wiser, it seems to me that there is probably nothing much weirder about me than anyone else out there. Each one of the feelings I've had when kids have been temporarily mine or stayed forever, related to 'letting go' is NORMAL. I'm not the only foster or adoptive parent who has ever had those thoughts or feelings. And I'm not going to apologize for them whether other people understand or not.

Any actions that I've taken in preparation for or in reaction to having to 'let go' have been based on my need to protect both the children I'm sending away, and those who are still in my family. Other folks, outside of the situation may perceive what I've done as 'meddlesome' or 'misguided'. But in reality, I don't have to be what people expect me to be. My 'role' isn't confused. My job is to provide care (temporary or life-long) to my children...that's anyone who happens to live in my house now or ever did before.

Unfortunately the strangers who've told me that they could never foster because they just couldn't 'let go' are right. All too often 'letting go' of something is a vital part of providing that care. So to those who might judge a foster or adoptive parent's motivations I say: If I feel sad, or angry, or hurt, or confused because I'm having to let go, then let me feel it. Unless you've walked a mile in my shoes, please don't impose your perceptions on me. Give me the courtesy to respect that I do a job that you would not choose to do. Look at my courage to step out and do what must be done despite the cost to me (and often those I hold dear), and view that with gratitude rather than contempt. I am not a saint, by far, but neither am I a lunatic. I do what I do because each day I strive to make the next 'right' choice. You don't have to agree with my choices, but please try to value where they come from.

When people work in a human service business, as we all do, then getting comfortable with the whole range of emotions that human service work entails is an absolute necessity. I challenge you to embrace what is messy, as letting go certainly is. Work to expand your understanding of those you interact with, so that you can give them the same courtesy of respect that you are due. And never lose sight of your focus on making the next right choice for the child you all care about.

Regards,



Lori Ross

Executive Director

MFCAA TRAINING SCHEDULE 2011

I've listed 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 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 www.mfcaa.org click on MFCAA members, then Programs, then Training & Support, then click on Training.

February 4 - Disaster Readiness Training

This is a required course that all foster parents need, to be prepared, for any emergency that requires planning ahead. Come learn from a fellow foster parent, who is also a certified nurse practitioner, a certified nurse midwife and a clinical instructor for UMKC School of Nursing.

Presenter: Mindy Gould

February 18 - "Filling the Gap: Specialized Needs for LGBTQ Youth

This training is an informative and enlightening introduction into the culture of youth who identify themselves as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and/or Questioning (LGBTQ). The training objectives will not only be to prepare adults on how to deal with these youth in an effective way, but to also understand and appreciate the culture. The training will mainly be an insight into the LGBTQ culture as it is today.

Presenter: Rick Williams, Project Coordinator, Ozanam/Pathways

March 4th - Identity and Parenting issues in Trans-racial and Trans-cultural Adoption

Adopting across cultural or racial lines adds responsibilities and parenting dilemmas. We have learned that love is not enough to equip the average trans-racially or trans-culturally adopted person for their life. This presentation will offer information about identity formation in the child/adolescent and offer a variety of ways in which foster/adoptive parents can help to build self-esteem, strong, positive identity, confidence and a comfort with self in children of color that they are raising. Children of color refers in this case to children who do not share the racial or cultural background of the family with whom they live.

Presenter: Nancy Simons Bean, M.S.W., L.S.C.S.W.

March 18th - Fix it and Forget it!

If you have been in a foster home, it's not unusual to see holes in the walls, windows shattered, or even plumbing problems that are often started because a child decided to take their anger and frustration out on the home instead of using their words. This training will teach you and your older youth how to fix some of these problems yourselves, without having to hire an outsider every time it happens. When their anger is part of the problem, their knowledge will be part of the solution!

Presenter: Monty Short, handyman

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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



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Feb		1 	2	3	4  	5
6	7	8 	9	10	11  	12
13	14	15 	16	17	18  	19
20	21	22 	23	24	25 	26
27	28					



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.

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.





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:

Feb 4— 6:30p-8:30p

Disaster Readiness Training - This is a required course, all foster parents need for any emergency that requires planning ahead. Mindy Gould—Certified nurse practitioner, certified nurse midwife, and clinical instructor for UMKC School of Nursing

Feb 18 — 6:30p-8:30p

Filling the Gap: Specialized Needs for LGBTQ Youth

Preparing adults on how to deal with these youth in an effective way and to understand and appreciate the culture.

“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.

IT’S PROM BOUTIQUE TIME AGAIN

Woods Chapel UMC, the Children's Division and MFCAA have teamed up again this year to host a Prom Boutique for girls in need of a prom dress. We have a nice selection of dresses and look forward to seeing lots of girls.

The Boutique will be held at:

**Woods Chapel United Methodist Church,
4725 Lakewood Way, Lee's Summit MO 64064**

Friday March 25th (1:00 pm - 7:00 pm)

Saturday March 26th (9:00 am to 1:00 pm)

Saturday April 2 (9:00 am to 1:00 pm)

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.

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.



all children all families TRAINING

TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2011
9 A.M. - 4 P.M.



Presented by the Downs Consulting Group in collaboration with the Human Rights Campaign.

TOPICS:

Module 1: Basic LGBT Competency for Foster Care and Adoption Agencies

This session introduces child welfare professionals to accurate and current information about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals. Agencies that wish to build an effective and affirming practice with LGBT clients much achieve, at the very least, basic competency with the community. Module 1 covers the fundamental terminology, facts, and concepts that agency staff must know to build an informed and sensitive practice.

Module 2: Foundations of Effective Practice with LGBT Parents

This session builds upon basic knowledge of the LGBT community and develops a specialized understanding of LGBT headed families. Participants learn about LGBT family demographics and research, their legal landscape, and what makes them similar to and unique from non-LGBT families. Module 2 includes firsthand accounts of LGBT parents and their children.

PARTICIPANTS WILL GAIN:

- Basic values, objectives, tools and resources of the AC-AF initiative
- Awareness of their own beliefs, values and assumptions in relationship to LGBT people
- Awareness of how their interaction with LGBT people affects their abilities in their professional roles
- Accurate information about LGBT people
- How to distinguish myths from facts
- How to interact in an affirming and welcoming manner
- Accurate info about LGBT parents and their children based on research
- Laws relating to LGBT adoption and foster placements in Missouri and Kansas
- A greater degree of empathy toward LGBT parents
- An understanding of the value of LGBT families to children in the foster care system.
- 6 hours of CEU's

INFORMATION:

All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church - 4501 Walnut Street, Kansas City, MO 64111

Cost for attendance is \$25 all day, or \$15 for a half day, but we strongly encourage participants to attend the whole day. Lunch will be on your own and many options are available at or near the beautiful Country Club Plaza.

To register, please contact MFCAA at 816-350-0215, or register online at www.mfcaa.org.

