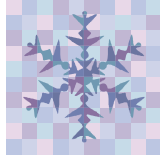




Midwest Foster Care and
Adoption Association
3210 S Lee's Summit Rd
Independence, MO
64055



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

January 2011

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.

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!





Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



Letter From the Executive Director

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Dear Friends,

This month begins MFCAA's 11th year of providing support and services to foster and adoptive families in the Kansas City area and beyond. As we enter into our second decade of service I'd like to take a moment to reflect on some of the amazing things we've achieved during the first ten years.

Many of you may not know the story of MFCAA's founding. More than twelve years ago now, a small STARS class made the decision that they didn't want to part ways just because the class was ending. An energetic young foster parent, Cindy Bishop, and an experienced teaching foster parent, Jim McManus, partnered together to continue bringing those folks together monthly for some training presentations and a pot luck dinner. After a few months, word of this new little support group began to spread, and several more experience foster parents began to attend as well. My husband and I were among that second group of folks. The meetings, then held at the Baptist Mission Center on 291 and Woods Chapel, became crowded, and the unlucky dads who drew the short straws and had to do child care duty on one side of a plastic divider wall, became overwhelmed when the kids who accompanied the more experienced foster parents started to join with their small group of birth and foster kids.

But the vigor of the group continued to grow. Prior to this particular relatively unremarkable support group forming, there had been several attempts to create support groups mostly spearheaded by the Division of Family Services (now Children's Division). But as was typical at the time two things tended to happen. Foster parents got together simply to moan and groan about the bad treatment they got, and agency staff got offended by the moaning and groaning and threw up barriers to effective problem solving. As is the case with most gripe groups, these groups all ultimately failed from lack of continued participation. Even the most negative of folks can't stand to hear nothing but bad news all the time.

The original MFCAA support group was far from the typical gripe group. It may be because the group was formed by new and excited foster parents, or it may be because it was a parents-only group with no agency staff involved, but the griping was kept to a minimum. While there were concerns expressed, the group resolved to stay positive and focus on solutions. That spirit of problem solving remained solid as the group grew, and became the fundamental piece of what MFCAA is about still to this day.

About 18 months into things, I have a clear memory of an evening spent at my kitchen table fumbling through the IRS instructions for filing an application for a 501(c)3 (non-profit designation) with about three other foster parents. Some of them are still fostering or raising adopted kids here in the KC area. None of us had any idea at the time of the depth and breadth of what we were trying to accomplish.

The thing that made this unremarkable group of us remarkable, was that we truly believed that we could do something that needed to be done. We didn't take no for an answer. We didn't view any challenge as too big. We knew that for every problem we encountered there had to be a solution (and usually more than one). And we had the tenacity to keep on going. Every member of that original group contributed something to the project. Some of us had life experiences we could use to help us establish services. Others of us had skills that could be put to use. But not one of us had ever established, run or funded a non-profit agency before.

As I think back, it seems that all the skills that we need as individual foster parents were the same skills we needed to form, fund and run this organization. Foster parents truly believe that they can make a difference for an abused or neglected child. They are discouraged by many folks along the way, and yet they don't take that discouragement as an excuse for quitting. They are each very different in terms of experience and skills and yet those differences contribute to the many strengths they bring to the children they care for. We didn't know it when we started MFCAA, but who would have been more ideally suited for creating an agency for foster and adoptive families than foster and adoptive families?

Ten whole years have passed since we received our IRS non-profit status. Our agency has grown from an all volunteer support group existing in borrowed space, to an agency with ten employees, and an operating budget that grows each year as it provides new and important services to foster and adoptive children and the families who care for them. Most of the core services we created when we opened the first MFCAA Foster and Adoptive Family Resource Center still exist today. We continue to offer food, clothes, furniture, and training books/videos. We still provide free and easily accessible in-service training on topics that matter to families. And we still work very hard, each day, to help foster and adoptive parents solve the problems they encounter as they strive to make that true difference in the lives of the children placed in their homes.

We have also started to provide respite services, mentoring for new foster/adopt families, support activities that allow our community to come together for fun events, specific services designed to assist adoptive parents in handling the challenges their children present, large scale systemic advocacy designed to change and improve the quality of life for children in foster care and the families caring for them, a multi-disciplinary annual conference designed to reduce system barriers, licensing services designed to recruit and retain families who can meet the needs of our older children, children with behavioral issues, and sibling groups, and so much more.

With our focus remaining solidly on the nebulous idea of the "best interest of children", we've never lost our way. In every endeavor, in every advocacy situation, in every training, and with every conversation we have with system partners and parents we look to put the needs and interests of our collective children FIRST. While we don't always achieve the outcome we hope for, and we know there is so much more to be done, we believe that by staying true to the mission of first and foremost making difference for children, we can usually find the solutions we're looking for, and we can usually do that in a way that involves all of our many system partners.

Happy New Year to the BEST families in the World!!!!!!

Sincerely,

Lori Ross

Lori Ross

Executive Director



What MFCAA Means to Us

We've been foster parents almost as long as MFCAA has been in existence. We joined this organization sometime in the 3rd year of my career. At first, we didn't know if MFCAA would be willing to work with our family. We are what you might call an "untraditional" family. But from day one, we've been embraced by MFCAA and supported as foster parents. Because our family doesn't look like a typical family, sometimes folks like to try to stop our involvement. MFCAA staffs were strong advocates in preventing these narrow-minded folks from winning wars based on discrimination.

From time to time there are disagreements in even the best working relationships. Once or twice, these disagreements were big enough that we needed outside assistance. One such incident happened when a particularly difficult birth-parent and her attorney were dragging out the case, when there was no chance of reunification. The child was being forced to continue visits with this parent and being more traumatized with each visit. The worker was unable to cross boundaries because the attorney was threatening all kinds of law suits and being really inappropriate. We contacted MFCAA and through our mutual efforts, we were able to pull together enough information to cause the case to move forward.

Had it not been for Lori, and the great staff at MFCAA, we would probably still be fighting that particular battle.

In addition to the "Fight" part of MFCAA, there is the tremendous support they provide. As foster parents, we sacrificed a lot including jobs and money. We did this simply because we love our kids and love being foster parents. But at the end of the day, money can certainly be an issue. The food pantry has saved us on several occasions, and the clothes closet has been invaluable on an ongoing basis. The Christmas program saves us every year even when we think we're going to avoid it and let other families get the gifts. (We like to pretend we don't need them, but it sure helps) Each time, MFCAA comes through and our kids have a remarkable Christmas.

We can't imagine how much more difficult being foster parents would be without MFCAA's support and assistance. Without their help, we would probably have quit LONG ago. Because of their support I can confidently say that 12 children have been a part of our home that wouldn't have been otherwise.

So, thank you MFCAA for all that you do for us!

Dave Wilson and Chuck Smith

What does MFCAA Mean to Me?

"When the whole world has gone mad, when you are overwhelmed by the demands of the bureaucracy, hurting birth parents, heartbroken kids, when none of your family or friends can understand what is going on in your life....then MFCAA is an island of sanity in a very crazy ocean that you are a paddling around in. We thank you more than you know." CW

"That dreams come true." LH

"MFCAA has saved my butt and my children multiple times. MFCAA has helped when my checks were wrong, helped write my adoption subsidies, sat in court for support when the adoption looked like it wouldn't happen, helped me find legal help so that my children could grow up with their siblings, and most of all you are my friends. You understand my crazy kids and this crazy system we have to live with. I recommend MFCAA to everyone I run across." LH

"Early on I had my first 'experience' with upper management and I just couldn't do it on my own. I felt so alone and had no idea where to turn to for help and guidance. I had no clue where to even begin to look for policy and it seemed like every other day there were new policy changes. MFCAA helped me every step of the way. I no longer felt like an outsider and most all I wasn't sitting alone in front of the county. I've been doing this for six years now and without MFCAA I surely would have given up long ago. It's just too hard to handle this all alone and it's so nice to know we don't have to because of MFCAA." TM

"MFCAA helped us to establish a chapter in St. Charles County allowing us to:

- Serve over 7,000 from our food pantry this year alone
- Give out the Mayor's box tickets for the circus
- Hand out Easter baskets to all of our children
- Throw a huge pool party and barbecue for our families
- Give backpacks and school supplies to our children
- Put new school shoes on the feet of our children
- Provide a complete Thanksgiving Dinner to our families
- Move our 'in home' food pantry into a food pantry complex, with rent paid for the first year!
- Provide Christmas gifts to all of our children
- Most importantly, because of your leadership, we have become better leaders in our area.
Thank you for showing us the way!" VH

MFCAA is Sounding the Call for Teen Clothing

With major assistance from Norman and Lorraine Martin, the Rotary of Independence, the Truman Heartland Foundation, and UMB Financial Corporation, the staff and families of MFCAA have created the *Kids' Clothes Closet*. The *Kids' Clothes Closet* has been a great success. Approximately 100 families monthly are provided with clothing, shoes, coats and school uniforms.

MFCAA is extremely grateful and we offer our appreciation to the over 180 individuals, churches, schools and organizations that have donated new and gently used items to the closet in 2010.

As we enter a new year and you begin cleaning out your closets and the closets of your teenagers we are asking that you once again remember the children and families of MFCAA. The one area that often presents a problem for us is teenage clothing. Young people coming into care often have very few belongings. An extra pair or two of jeans, hoodies, or shirts can go a long way in helping them feel a little less "different" than their peers.

High school students have school functions or job interviews that call for dress clothes. They are often excited about these events and come into *the Kids' Clothes Closet* looking for that special outfit. Unfortunately we too frequently are not able to meet the need. Clothing for boys and girls ages 13 through 18 seems to be our greatest shortage.











Our goal for the *Kid's Clothes Closet*, through 2011 is to create a Teen Center, and we need your help. There are several ways you can help.

1. Consider donating any gently used teen style and sized clothing
2. Conduct a "Teen Clothing Drive" at your church or school.
3. Donate gift cards to local stores that will allow young people to purchase special occasion, hard to fit, or school uniforms that may not be available.
4. Donate cash or gift cards to be used by MFCAA to purchase new underwear, socks and hygiene products to have available at the *Teen Center*.

As we move through 2011, please remember young people come into care during all seasons so we ask that you continue to keep us in mind. We do ask that your donations are gently used or new and appropriate for teenagers.

Thanks for your help!



Jan						1
2	3	4 	5	6	7  	8 MFCAA STARS 9-4
9	10	11 	12	13	14 	15 MFCAA STARS 9-4
16	17	18 	19	20	21  	22 MFCAA STARS 9-4
23	24	25 	26	27	28 	29



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).

Christmas Party Thank You

Over 600 attended MFCAA’s Christmas dinner and family celebration at the American Royal. Families enjoyed an amazing dinner, Santa, games, music and a raffle. Several individuals and groups help make this celebration a great success.

The **American Royal** once again donated a wonderful space that provided plenty of room for dinner and children’s activities.

Cary Hall (KMBZ -980, news radio) emceed the event. He conducted the give-away of fifty \$100 gift certificates to MFCAA families and kept the festivities moving.

Employees of **UMB – Financial Corporation and Benefits by Design** decorated the American Royal hall, creating a festive Christmas party space for our family dinner and celebration.

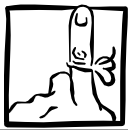
The **Foresters - Overland Branch** donated and served many amazing deserts and drinks. There were many smiling little faces walking away from their tables.

Teens from local Presbyterian churches did a fabulous job of providing a myriad of games, crafts and activities for children of all ages.

Nu Epsilon Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. provided children with the opportunity to decorate gingerbread cookies. Many fashionably dressed gingerbread people went home with their creators and some did not make it out of the auditorium.

Rick Reynolds and Shawn O’Kelley did a wonderful job of representing old St. Nick! They were among the last of the volunteers leaving, taking requests to deliver to Santa until the last moment.

And thanks to the many volunteers who showed up to help with all parts of the set-up, check-in and serving. You all deserve a round of applause and many kudos for providing our families an incredible evening.



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:

Jan 7— 6:30-8:00

Drug Court/The Visitation Project 6:30-8:00

By: Penny Clodfelter

Jan 21—6:30-8:00(rsvp for dinner @6:30 to mary@mfcaa.org or call 350-0215)

Understanding Adoption—Jim Waits

"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.

An MFCAA Recipe Book - What a great idea for our families!

Creating a nutritional home is one of the most important steps you can take to ensure the health of your child. Making smart food choices now will help our children develop a positive relationship with healthy food. Our children will learn their food smarts from our example.

The link between a good diet and our children's well being and ability to learn is being proved more and more by new research. We all want to feed our families good food so they can thrive at school and at play.

How do you give your family good quality, healthy meals each day but stick to your budget at the same time? Healthy, nutritious cooking for a big family can be difficult. If you take into consideration palates and budgets, it can seem daunting. We are gathering some ideas and recipes (we're talking food that children like). Food that will make both cooking and shopping easy, inexpensive and fun.

Send us your recipes, shopping tips, coupon sources, backyard garden ideas and we will use them to greater "The Big Family's Resource Guide to Healthy Eating"

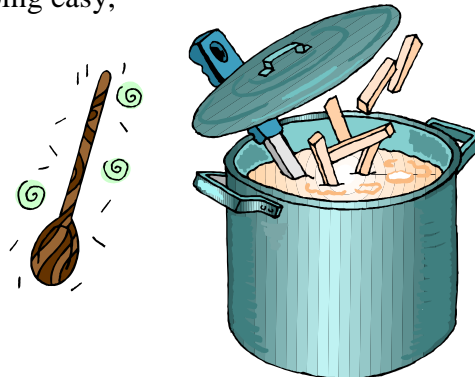
E-mail or regular mail would be great!

Kim at kim@mfcaa.org

MFCAA

3210 South Lee's Summit Road

Independence, Missouri 64055



As a corporate sponsor of MFCAA, the law offices of Krigel & Krigel, P.C. would like to assist adoptive parents to determine their eligibility to receive the new **refundable** federal adoption tax credit.

**If you know someone who has adopted a child
OVER THE LAST 7 YEARS, they may be eligible
for a **refundable** federal adoption tax credit
of up to **\$13,170 per child.****

In 2010 the law regarding the federal adoption tax credit changed. Most individuals who adopted a child in 2010 who was in foster care, are entitled to receive a check from the federal government for \$13,170 per child – even if they paid nothing toward the cost of their adoption. Individuals adopting as far back as 2003, may also be eligible to receive a refundable credit.

The law firm of Krigel & Krigel, P.C. will be assisting adoptive parents to determine if they are eligible for the refundable federal adoption tax credit.

**If you would like to set up an appointment
to discuss your eligibility to receive the new
refundable credit, call the law office of**

Krigel & Krigel, P.C. at 816-756-5800

THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THE INITIAL APPOINTMENT.

If it is determined that you are eligible for the credit, Krigel & Krigel is willing to prepare your federal, state and local tax returns and assist you in applying for your refundable credit.

You will not be billed for our services until after the time your refundable credit is expected.

For every family that we assist, a \$100.00 contribution will be paid to Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association.



KRIGEL & KRIGEL, P.C.
LAW OFFICES

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