



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

Happy 
St. Patrick's Day

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March 2011



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 have them contact Jennifer Johnson at 350-0215 ext 22 or by email jenniferj@mfcaa.org or visit our website, mfcaa.org.



Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



Letter From the Executive Director

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Dear Friends,

This week I read another horrifying story of child abuse, this time from Florida, involving a foster/adoptive family. One child died of the abuse, and others were in awful condition as a result of heinous treatment. You have all read these types of stories before. They make the news in a big way each time they happen. And each time someone reads one of these stories, or sees some negative dramatization of foster care/adoption on television, it reinforces in their minds the stereotype of foster parents as money-grubbing welfare cheats who care nothing about children at best, and who exploit or hurt children as a common practice.

This unrealistic stereotype carries over into the experience we all have as we provide foster care services or adopt children from foster care. When this is the picture someone has in their minds' eye about foster/adoptive parents, it is no wonder that everyone we interact with, including teachers, social workers, doctors and more, view us with suspicion.

For those of us who work so hard each day to support and promote the amazing work done by foster and adoptive families, combating this negative image of foster and adoptive parents is something that is just part and parcel of the job. And clearly that job is much harder to do when we continue to read real life tragedies about folks like the Florida adoptive family.

When MFCAA first began more than ten years ago, the Jackson County Children's Division was still involved in a Consent Decree Case which stemmed from legal action on behalf of children in foster care here in Kansas City, who had been abused and neglected while in care. I know it will seem shocking to all of you, but it took us more than thirty years to remedy that situation to the satisfaction of the federal court in order to be released from their jurisdiction in that case.

For those of you who were around and fostering ten plus years ago, you may remember a time before MFCAA, when foster and adoptive families were not well connected to each other, to supports and services, and to the latest information on policy, law, and practices which benefit kids and families. As our website history details, all of that was dramatically changed with the creation of the first Foster and Adoptive Family Resource Center. Remember the first MFCAA Resource Center in the old school building on Blue Ridge in Kansas City?

For the first time ever, hundreds of foster and adoptive families came out of their isolation and became acquainted with each other. A solid community was formed in that old school building, and the beginnings of the MFCAA programs and services offered options to families who had never been served in this way before.

After our first year of providing services, we noticed a dramatic difference in the statistics kept by the Children's Division in Jackson County: the number of substantiated hotlines on foster families diminished by 50%. There was no way to directly tie the decrease in abuse in foster homes to the MFCAA Foster and Adoptive Family Resource Center, but it was the only significant change impacting the community at that time.

That decrease in foster care abuse has continued over the years since. Currently the incidence of abuse in foster care in Kansas City is dramatically lower than that in the general population, despite the fact that our foster and adoptive families are caring for children with substantially more significant emotional and behavioral problems than families in the general population.

We can only assume that something is working for our local foster and adoptive families, and that something is absolutely connected to their ability to interact with and be supported by each other.

Research has identified factors which contribute to a higher risk of child abuse. These include:

- Children with disabilities or mental retardation*
- Social isolation of families *
- Parents' lack of understanding of child development and children's needs
- Poverty and other socioeconomic disadvantages*
- Family disorganization (including divorce and domestic violence)
- Lack of family cohesion*

- Substance abuse in families
- Parental stress and distress*
- Community violence*

Factors which are marked with an asterisk are factors which can commonly be found in foster or adoptive families. MFCAA's Resource Center model, even without knowing it was doing so, impacted many of the factors listed above. By connecting parents to each other, the commonality of the problems our kids face became clear. No longer was there shame in being the parent with the kid who acts out. All of a sudden, we recognized that each of us was dealing with the same types of things. We weren't failing as parents to fix these things, in fact, this was a new 'normal' for us as foster and adoptive parents.

The isolation which fed the stress leading to the potential for abusive treatment of difficult kids was largely eliminated with the formation of the Kansas City foster and adoptive parent community. Natural supports and friendships developed, and suddenly families could help each other with the problems their kids were facing. The Resource Center provided food, clothes, school supplies, Christmas and Birthday gifts, etc... which reduced the economic disadvantage inherent in a system which pays less than 1/3 of the cost of actually caring for abused and neglected kids.

When the center started offering families with help in resolving the problems they faced in dealing with the many systems their kids interacted with, through our individual advocacy programs, things changed even more. The reduction in stress for families as a result of this new Resource Center was dramatically apparent, and likely accounted for the majority of the reduction in that foster care abuse.

Research similarly tells us what the protective factors are that exist in families who don't abuse their children. These things include:

- A supportive family environment
- Nurturing parenting skills
- Stable family relationships
- Household rules and parental monitoring of those rules
- Parental employment and education
- Adequate housing
- Access to health care and social services, and
- Communities that support parents and take responsibility for preventing abuse.

All of the things that MFCAA provides and spends its time advocating for legislatively and individually are geared toward addressing the issues noted above. We fight daily to strengthen the families who do this work in every way possible.

As we move into this 2011 Child Abuse Prevention month we know that several factors have been shown to be effective in preventing abuse. Public awareness activities can help get the word out about specific risk factors for child abuse. For example I'm sure all of you are very aware of the "Never Shake a Baby" campaign. On a more personal note, some parent and child education programs have proven to be successful, again for target populations. An example is the program provided in schools related to "safe touch". A colleague of mine, Rene Howitt, who sits on the Missouri Task Force For Children's Justice, has created a wonderful program called Cope24 (www.Cope24.com) which provides education to middle and high school students on the realities of parenting stress. I'd encourage you to check this program out and work with your school district to bring it to your children. The other prevention strategies identified as successful in the literature may sound familiar to you. Those include home visiting programs, respite and crisis care, and the use of family resource centers.

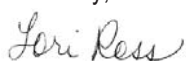
This month I want to challenge you all to reach out and connect with a new foster or adoptive parent. If you know folks in the community who have adopted through foster care, privately or internationally, ask them to join you at an MFCAA family fun event or training. If you have some spare time, consider signing up with our Strengthening Families program as a mentor family for newer foster and adoptive families, and get to know these families by inviting them to visit in your home and by visiting them in their homes. Offer a weekend once a month to provide respite to a family needing a break.

The more we surround our families with the kind of support and connectedness they need as they do this work, the more we reduce the risk that the stress of caring for our challenging kids will end in a preventable tragedy. As I realize, every single time I write a newsletter article about my personal experiences in foster and adoptive parenting, how much each one of us lives the very same experiences; I am reminded daily that we are all one big family in doing this work.

If you can help another family in one of the ways listed above, or if you have some additional ideas for support you can provide, please contact us at the MFCAA offices 816-350-0215.

Let's do our part this Child Abuse Prevention month and make a difference for our kids!

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.

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

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.



sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
Mar		1 	2	3	4  	5
6	7	8 	9	10	11 9a-12p BIST Refresher 	12 BIST
13	14	15 	16	17	18  	19
20	21	22 	23	24	25 	26 BIST
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



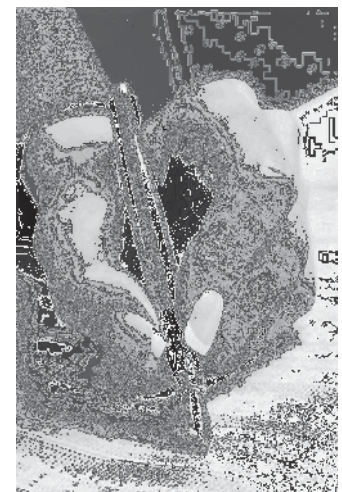
NOTE: On the first Friday of each month, the Food Pantry is available to those who attend training in the evening. It is not open 9a-2p on this day.

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





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:

Mar 4 - 6:30p-8:30p

Identity and Parenting issues in Trans-racial and Trans-cultural Adoption- Adopting across cultural or racial lines adds responsibilities and parenting dilemmas.

Mar 18 - 6:30p-8:30p

Fix it and Forget it! Fix it 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!

"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.

PROM BOUTIQUE

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 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)**

BIST IS HERE!

We are excited to announce that BIST (Behavior Intervention Support Team) will be presented at MFCAA on 3 Saturdays; March 12th, 26th and April 2 from 9am to 4pm! The charting that we learned in the ABC model is an effective intervention for small children to address specific behaviors one at a time. Older children challenge the idea of incentives and rewards. BIST will work in conjunction with the ABC model to help parents look deeper than the behavior we can see and hear. The BIST model works to develop responses to feelings and situations that will *not* be disruptive or hurtful and, therefore, result in the child being "in trouble".

Ozanam brought BIST to KC in 1993 and has since trained large school districts, as well as residential facility staff to use this method for behavior management. One of our foster parents wrote, "I am a teacher for students with emotional and behavioral disorders and I have used BIST in my classroom with students from Kindergarten – 12th grade. It works!" She went on to say that she has taken this training several times and always leaves wanting more. Other foster parents have reported, "The one who changed the most is me. I can now intervene calmly and quickly without anger."

Come learn how to use teaching and protecting rather than punishing and "starting over" so that our most fragile children can learn skills that will change them for a lifetime.

Ribs For Kids

Mark Your Calendars

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.

A second opportunity to join in the celebration includes a donation of \$200 or more to the MFCAA Resource Center, making you a member of the caring supporters we designate as **Special Friends**. As a Special Friend, you and a guest are invited to our **Ribs for Kids Gala**, Thursday, March 31st, from 6p-8p, at the home of **The Roasterie**, 1204 West 27th Street, K.C., MO where you will enjoy wine tasting, hors d'oeuvres, music and an opportunity to meet MFCAA's Board and other major supporters and friends. You will also have the opportunity to buy your rib tokens in advance. By joining this special group, you will help provide the promise of forever loving families for children of our community who have been abused, neglected or abandoned. Donations may be made online at mfcaa.org or sent to MFCAA, 3210 South Lee's Summit Road, Independence, MO 64055.

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