



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



May 2011

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Recipe of the Month

No-Bake Chicken and Vegetable Noodle Casserole

Provided by Nutra-Net, Inc.

1 can cream of chicken soup (93¢)
Milk to thin (10¢)
2 cups frozen or canned peas, drained (69¢)
2 chicken breasts, cooked, cut in chunks (\$3.88)
2 cups egg noodles (52¢)

1. Make noodles according to package directions. Strain.
2. Add soup, peas, and chicken to noodles. Thin with milk.
3. Heat until bubbly and serve.

Serves 8 at approximately 77¢ per serving, total: \$6.12.

Nutritional information per 1 cup serving: 168 calories, 18 grams protein, 14 grams carbohydrates, 4 grams fat, 321 milligrams sodium, 4 grams fiber.

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Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association Newsletter



Letter From the Executive Director

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Dear Friends,

Today I had a phone call from a foster parent who will be staffed soon for the possible adoption of a little person she's had in her home for less than nine months. She dearly loves this little person and she is extremely anxious and even physically impacted by the level of worry she has about what the outcome of that staffing will be. While she is a wonderful parent, and has provided excellent care to this little person for his/her whole life, in just a short while a room full of people will be deciding whether or not she is, in fact, good enough to be that child's forever parent.

Not long ago I was talking with another parent who was struggling with the painful realization that her child has a mental condition that is not likely to significantly improve. The behaviors that accompany that mental condition caused her to have to put structures in place in his life which prohibit him from experiencing most of the things that typical children get to experience. Her worries are about his present 'less than she'd like for him' life experiences and his future.

Last night, as I sat next to my husband in our bed, we were re-capping the issues of the day. I mentioned the issue of our middle clothes dryer having suddenly quit working. I'd sent him a text earlier in the day, that he clearly hadn't received, because he immediately perked up and said "What's wrong with the middle dryer? Who messed it up?" He then hopped back out of bed, despite my encouragement to let it wait until the morning, to examine the dryer for himself. Then he launched into a discourse on our own irresponsible children. He went on about how we need to be more careful about who we ask to change the laundry in our house, and he wanted to know exactly who, did I think, broke the machine. The peaceful evening re-cap was done, and in its place was frustration and worry about a problem that my sweet husband could do not one stinking thing about at 9PM.

Every day, dozens of times each day, human beings are presented with situations, problems, challenges which are immediate or long-term, and for which a decision or choice is required. Some of us lament our lost childhoods because it was a time of less worry. But in reality, the worries of childhood have faded in our memories. We see glimpses of them in the faces of our children when they sweat telling us about their grades, or keep the secret of the meaner kids at school from us, or cake make-up on over their acne. Even typical children without lives impacted by family violence, chaos and trauma have significant daily worries.

Teenage children are filled with constant angst over what others (their peers) think of them. And for that matter, for many adults, that same worry follows them into adulthood. But adults also pile on the worries that responsibility brings. They worry, not only about their relationships, they also add in the money worries, the house, the car, the job. They worry about previously unseen problems that suddenly become evident with age, like health, and security, and what's going on in their community or their country or their world.

Sometimes people are so paralyzed by worry that they become clinically impacted. They have stress related disorders, they take GI medications and Xanax. They develop insomnia and are riddled with self-doubt and fear.

As I pointed out earlier, the child welfare system is a great breeding ground for worry. So much trauma and tragedy on the front end, with a healthy dose of helplessness and lack of control in the middle, and the soup is heated by the painful understanding that children we've grown to love are at ultimate risk. Children are wrought with worry. Parents are overcome with anxiety. Fear is such a prevalent emotion that it's a wonder that any of it functions at all.

Leo Buscaglia, a professor, author and motivational speaker once said, "Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy."

I am a strong believer in the power of the human spirit. I think most foster and adoptive parents are. I believe that human beings are naturally resilient and that we have been provided with the gift of an amazing brain which allows us to choose. We don't only choose between alternative courses of action as we consider our dozens of opportunities for action each day, but we also choose how we feel

and experience those opportunities. We decide whether a situation is a challenge or an opportunity. We frame our perspective for ourselves. The only limits we face on how we feel about the life we are dealing with in the moment are the limits we impose on ourselves.

Gut human emotions like joy and sadness and anger are a part and parcel of every single human experience. Those we don't control. But how we think about those emotions, and how we think about the situations that inspire those emotions, that we can control.

I know, without any doubt, that my two disabled children are not going to live as long as typical children do. I suspect that unless I get hit by a bus or develop a disease, they will pre-decease me. I know that even thinking about the potential for that experience brings a level of sadness to my heart and my mind that is indescribable. And yet, I choose to walk through the journey of parenting those two children (one of whom I chose to parent knowing what I was getting myself into). I don't spend my days or nights worrying about what will ultimately happen. I remind myself each day to value every smile, every precious moment, and sometimes I'm successful in doing that. I have a general idea of what the steps will be to handle the tasks that will be necessary when that happens, although I don't want to think about it in depth until I'm there. When they get sick, as they often do, I don't work myself up into a worried frenzy. Instead I choose to expect the best and work toward making sure that's what happens. And for 22 years with one of them and 11 years with the other, that's exactly what's happened.

In my life I've chosen to expect positive outcomes and then act to do everything within my power to make sure those outcomes have the best possible chance of happening. The key to that sentence is understanding what 'everything within my power' is. Because once I've done everything within my power, I then make the choice to let go. As I've written before, there are things that are FAR beyond our power to control. And for those things trying to control what is uncontrollable, or worrying about what you cannot effect, is wasted energy and useless sorrow.

But having said that, I also encourage you to consider a wider vision of what actually is 'in your power' to impact. Just as we frame our perspective for ourselves, we also frequently limit our field of influence by selling ourselves short. We don't see ourselves as powerful, and therefore we fulfill our own prophecies. We let those who are in positions of authority or who seem to be better educated, or have more money, or have some inside connections become somehow more than the plain and simple human beings that they are. We let our own insecurities keep us from speaking up, demanding and expecting respect and consideration, and taking action. We are paralyzed, not by a real inability to affect a situation, but rather by our own belief that we are powerless.

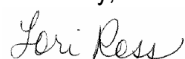
For the parent who is worried about the adoption staffing coming up, I encourage you to continue to love your child uninhibited by the possibility that where there is fierce love sometimes there is also terrible pain. And like every other process that we must endure in life, this too shall pass. You have the ability to affect the outcome of your family situation in lots of ways. You can work to ensure that the team members understand why you are the best choice for this child. You can make sure your best advocates participate in the staffing. And finally, if the team doesn't choose you, you can respond by making the choice to file independent legal action or you can choose to let go. You are not powerless.

For the parent who is grieving the loss of her hopes and her dreams for her child who suffers from mental illness which cannot be cured, I encourage you to also love your child uninhibited by the pain that you currently feel. We aren't the artists of our children's futures. We don't get to choose the roads they walk down. What we can do is to ensure that they have the love and the supports they need to always know that someone out there loved them very much. You are parenting your child in the way your child needs to be parented. Give yourself permission to feel good about yourself, and in doing that, your child will have the best example in the world of how he or she can feel good too.

And for my dear, sweet husband, a broken dryer isn't the end of the world. We'll get another one. The lunkhead who overloaded the dryer and burnt out the engine didn't mean to cost us the price of a new dryer. He or she was trying to fulfill the responsibilities of a family member. In ten years from now, will it really matter that we had to buy a new dryer? And, PS. That hour at the end of the day is way too valuable to spend it upset and fussing over a dryer that we can't unbreak.

Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor, once said, "To live happily is an inward power of the soul". I couldn't have put it better myself!

Sincerely,



Lori Ross

May is National Foster Care Month

MFCAA likes to trumpet the heroic efforts of our foster and adoptive parents every month of the year. So this year on National Foster Care Month, we invite you to work with us to engage our community in learning about and supporting the work these amazing families do all year long. Here are some suggestions for ways to engage your churches, schools, libraries and businesses in 'foster friendly' practices.

For Churches/Faith Based Groups:

- Spotlight foster care during one day of worship during the month of May.
- Invite members who are foster/kinship or adoptive parents, or foster care alumni to be part of a service or to speak to the congregation about their experiences.
- Hand out a foster care or respite recruitment flyer after a service.
- Feature key facts about foster care in your church bulletin.
- Do a drive for clothes, diapers or school supplies to provide assistance to MFCAA.
- Sponsor a young person graduating from high school (help with graduation expenses, provide furniture, clothes, gas cards, dishes, etc...)
- Mentor a young person in a residential treatment facility or independent living arrangement.
- Provide a support system to foster/adoptive/kinship families within the congregation. Remember them at holidays with gifts, food, monetary contributions.
- Offer support services individually to foster families by matching adult helpers with foster or adopted youth with special needs so that the children can participate in Sunday school or Vacation Bible School.

For Teachers/Educators:

- Understand the reasons kids come into foster care and recognize that usually the situation is not related to the child's problems, but rather the problems of the child's parents.
- Recognize the enormous educational risks associated with a foster care experience for children who find themselves in this situation. Read up on the poor educational outcomes for kids in care.
- Connect with child welfare staff, foster/adoptive parents, kinship providers and reach out in friendship to offer additional help and support when possible.
- Offer access to tutoring, mentoring, peer group support, counseling, test preparation, etc.. to assist the child in achieving some level of success educationally and socially at school.
- Offer alternative assignments for classroom projects which are not adoption or foster care friendly. Recognize that some students won't have access to baby pictures, family history or other information that most students have.

For Librarians:

- Understand the reasons kids come into foster care and recognize that usually the situation is not related to the child's problems, but rather the problems of the child's parents.
- Brainstorm ways the library or its staff can provide books, educational materials and resources to support a child's opportunity to read and learn in a safe environment.
- Offer suggestions to foster/adoptive and kinship parent organizations about ways to promote reading.
- Host reading 'lock in' events or other family fun events for foster and adoptive families in partnership with MFCAA or other foster parent support organizations.
- Broaden the library's offerings to include books on foster, adoptive and kinship families and topics.
- Create a special foster care month display, featuring books written by foster parents and alumni of foster care, and put out materials on the need for foster parents or respite providers in your area.

For Businesses:

- Establish a scholarship fund for a foster youth transitioning into college or into independent living.
- Become a career mentor to a foster youth or a youth adopted from foster care. These young people are especially vulnerable to unemployment and underemployment and don't have the same opportunities to use 'who they know' to help them get their initial foot in the door to decent job opportunities.
- Feature a recruitment message in the company newsletter along with a profile of an inspirational foster youth or an employee involved in fostering/adopting and already making a difference for children impacted by abuse/neglect.
- Invite representatives from MFCAA to make a presentation at your workplace during lunch sometime in May.
- Select MFCAA or your local foster/adopt association to benefit from a school supply drive to benefit foster and adopted youth.
- Hire a foster youth to intern with your company during the summer.
- Sponsor a fundraising activity for your local foster and adoptive parent support organization.
- Offer to serve on the Board of Directors for your local foster/adoptive family support organization.

Children's Division Leadership Changes

Virginia Lewis-Brunk, Kansas City's Regional Director, left the Children's Division on April 15, after many years of service in the Kansas City area. Also on April 15th, Marta Halter was appointed to the position of Interim Director of the Kansas City Region.












Ms. Halter began her work in the Kansas City area on April 18, to facilitate a smooth leadership transition. Marta has most recently been serving as the Director for the North Region of the Children's Division. There, she has been responsible for providing leadership to over 570 staff in 23 circuits across the Region's 55 counties. She is known for her superior management skills and ability to achieve strong outcomes on behalf of the children and families with whom the Children's Division works.

Marta began her career as a Social Service Worker in Boone County and has held progressive experiences during her 26 years of tenure with the department. She has fostered excellent working relationships with a host of statewide stakeholders and built numerous community partnerships.

With Marta's transfer to the Kansas City Region, Wendy Austin is also being appointed to an acting position, serving as the Interim Director for the North Region. This change also began Monday, April 18. Wendy has been with the department for over 20 years, most recently serving as the Field Services Supervisor for the Children's Division in the Northwest Region. She has held several progressive experiences within the Children's Division including County Director and Assistant Area Director.

Wendy previously served as an Interim Regional Director for the North Region, and was a great asset to the DSS during a prior transition. Her comprehensive knowledge and established relationships will be a strength as she steps into the interim position.

The leadership transition in Kansas City will also involve an organizational review of the Jackson County Circuit in order to identify opportunities to build a better, more efficient and effective organization. Over the next several months, a small team of individuals who have a wealth of experience with organizational reviews and are familiar with the Children's Division will work to engage people at all levels to gain a comprehensive understanding of the circuit, its operation and culture. This team will develop an Organizational Assessment Report including recommendations to address identified challenges.

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
1 May	2	3 	4	5	6  	7 Stars
8	9	10 	11	12	13 	14
15	16	17 	18	19	20  	21 Stars
22	23	24 	25	26	27 	28
29	30 Memorial Day MFCOA Office Closed	31 				



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:



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.

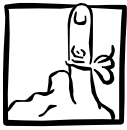
Clothes Closet & Food Pantry

MFCOA's Clothing Closet provides clothing, shoes, coats, toys, high chairs, car seats and more, free of charge, to all MFCOA Members. Clothing Closet hours are 9am-2pm on Tuesdays and Fridays.

MFCOA'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.

MFCOA'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



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:

May 6th - Successful Strategies for Managing Finances

We are going to hear strategies we can put in place now so that when a crisis happens we can stay calm and teach our children, by example, to handle crisis situations with ease.

May 20th - Sexually Acting Out

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.

"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."

Summer Camps

Here are a few summer camps in the area for special needs children. For more camps visit mfcaa.org or call 816-350-0215.

- **Camp Erin** (held at the Heartland Presbyterian Center, Parkville, MO) is a two day overnight camp for kids ages 6 to 17 who are grieving the death of someone close to them. Staffed by certified grief counselors and hosted by Kansas City Hospice, this camp is free and early application is recommended.
- **Concerned Care, Inc.** (North Kansas City, MO) hosts recreational sports, youth day camp and vocational day camp for young people with developmental disabilities. Campers must be Clay County residents.
- **Girl Scouts Juliette Low Camp** (Jackson County, MO) is held at Rotary Youth Camp at Lake Jacomo for girls with physical disabilities, ages 8-18. Campers are encouraged to invite friends without disabilities to share the camp experience with them. This is an overnight camp, lasting 6 nights.
- **Horizon Academy** (Roeland Park, KS) sponsors summer classes for kids with average or above average intelligence who are struggling with basic skills due to learning disabilities. This summer, they offer a full summer school program, a reading clinic, a math clinic, a social skills clinic and an art clinic for grades 1-12.
- **Spofford Scamps Summer Day Camp** (south Kansas City, MO) holds day camps at their campus near Oakwood Country Club. An unbelievably good resource for Kansas City, Spofford works with children with behavioral issues related to abuse, neglect and mental health disorders. Day camp is offered for children, ages 6-13. Camp goals are related to social skills development, peer interaction, self-confidence and conflict resolution.
- **Wonderland Camp** (Lake of the Ozarks) is a residential camp for children with developmental and physical challenges. All of the traditional camp activities are offered. There are also special weeks for children with Prader Willi Syndrome and brain injuries.



Social Network Article Follow Up

Sometimes the JCFAP Loop has Critically Important Information. Here's an example of a posted response to a discussion about social networks and safety for kids:

My kids are not yet old enough to have a Facebook, but when they are, it will definitely be a requirement that we are "friends"...

HOWEVER

I did want to send a friendly warning to all of the parents out there who might believe that by being their child's "friend" they are getting an accurate view of their FB activities...

We all know about the privacy options in FB. The obvious-- setting your entire account to be viewed by "Friends only", "Friends of Friends" or "Everyone".

There are also privacy settings for photo albums, your status updates, individual photos, videos, relationship statuses, etc.

The privacy options are "Friends Only", "Friends of Friends", "Everyone"... **AND (here's the kicker) "CUSTOMIZE"**.

The CUSTOMIZE setting allows you to set your photo, status, album, relationship, etc... to be viewed by "Friends Only Except For..." (and then the person simply clicks on anyone on their friends list whom they don't want to be able to see it). To the person whose name they've clicked on, it's as if that album, photo, whatever, doesn't exist.

Our children could be customizing what it is we can see from their Facebook, hiding anything that they know we wouldn't approve of. On the flip side, the CUSTOMIZE Option also allows you to choose "No one Except For..."

If the child is particularly crafty, he/she could make a status update saying "Staying after school to study for my final..." or "Spending the night at Beth's house" and then make that only viewable to their parent (so their friends wouldn't see it and post comments like "What? Dude you're at the party sitting right next to me") ;)

NOT that any of our kids would do such a thing!!! I just know how my mind worked as a teenager (unfortunately)... and so I am thankful that Facebook did not exist during those painful years for me!