



Family Ties



Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine

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Newsletter

December 2012

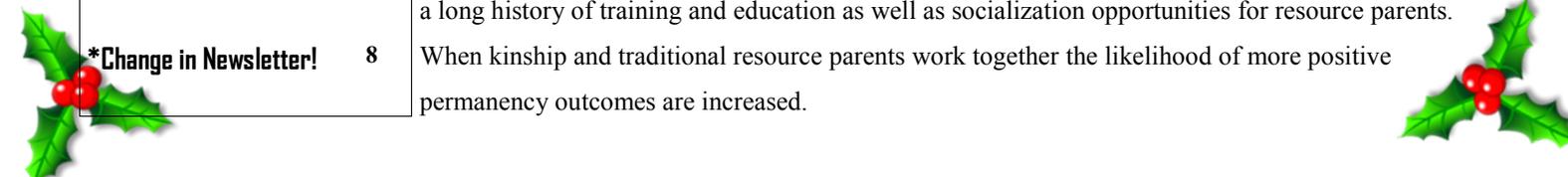
AFFM Year in Review

Happy New Year to friends and colleagues of AFFM,

In the past two weeks we completed a gift giving campaign that began in late August and culminated on December 6, 2012. The gigantic effort, supplied gifts to well over 800 children. As readers can imagine the logistical nightmare of getting all those gifts to the families located from Kittery to Fort Kent and Machias to Dixfield and all points in between was no small feat and all who helped deserve a heartfelt round of thanks. The thank you list to the many kind and generous donors is huge! Thank you sincerely to all who contributed to the joy and easing of burdens at this special time of the year.

Our wonderful friends at the Spirit of Giving Committee set this practice of giving presents to children and families in need using AFFM as the sponsoring agency approximately 9 years ago. The giving practice has grown so much that even with the Spirit of Giving Committee providing gifts to over 500 children in our program, AFFM still needed to find sponsors for nearly 300 children. I hope those whose children got gifts from this amazing campaign will take time to send cards and or letters. We at AFFM will share your messages with all the wonderful individuals and groups that donated gifts. All who helped and shared their time, treasure and talents were appreciated. Many of us were able to hand gifts to families and viewed first-hand the gratitude and thankfulness of the receivers but it is a small number that actually see this so the cards and notes really do help. If you have pictures to share of your children with their gifts those would also be appreciated.

This Month's Family Ties:		
AFFM Year in Review Continued	2	In addition to all the holiday gifts distributed, AFFM held holiday parties. A pool party was held in Bangor and one at the YMCA in Portland. All were well attended. Potluck provided at the party in Bangor. Santa and Mrs. Claus handed age appropriate books to every child along with candy canes and a stuffed toy. Photo opportunities were provided at both parties along with arts and crafts. In
Growing with Our Adopted Children	4	Portland guests were treated to pizza and special desserts. These holiday parties grow each year and the ratings are always near or total 100% satisfaction. As one might imagine, in a time when DHHS is actively engaging kin in the planning and placement of children for whom child protection becomes a
Meet the Staff	5	concern, the numbers of kinship families becoming members of AFFM has increased
Work Readiness Workshops	6	dramatically. AFFM is working diligently to increase opportunities for traditional Resource Families
Upcoming Training Kinship Corner	7	(foster and adoptive parents) to partner with kin as transitions are made. Maine has been blessed with a long history of training and education as well as socialization opportunities for resource parents.
*Change in Newsletter!	8	When kinship and traditional resource parents work together the likelihood of more positive permanency outcomes are increased.



During Adoption Awareness Month in November, a tea co-hosted by First Lady, Ann LePage and AFFM was held at the Blaine House. The turnout was somewhat lower than usual but those who attended had a fabulous time. The individual stories shared were as always amazing! Maine continues to make getting youth to permanency a priority and it is never clearer than during Adoption Awareness Month. AFFM also co-hosted an event at the Hall of Flags. Carol, Nick and Austin each shared pieces of their compelling journeys to adoption. AFFM and several private foster care placing agencies provided lots of door prizes as well as snacks to families and friends attending the Hall of Flag event. Thank you August Pizza Hut for providing pizza to all attendees. AFFM was also fortunate to partner with several agencies across Maine to assist with legalizations of adoptions at the Children Museum in Portland and Bangor. Congratulations to all the families in Maine who added to or formed a family through adopting one or more of Maine's waiting children. The Maine Adoption Awareness

Committee also presented Judge Woodcock and Penobscot county probate court staff, Judge Mazziotti and Cumberland county probate court staff, and Judge Donna Bailey and York county probate court staff with a plaque in honor of their efforts in supporting adoptions at the Children's Museums.

The AFFM conference which typically takes place in April was held as a combined effort with the New England Foster Care Association Training Conference, on October 12, 13 and 14, 2012 at the Double Tree in Portland. (Watch the affm.net website for information about the April 2013 conference.) Dr. Joseph Crumbley and Derek Clark were amazing in their individual keynotes as well as workshops.

In September AFFM participated in 5k Run at the New Balance outlet in Skowhegan. This event was collaboration between AFFM and DHHS of Skowhegan. Funds collected from the run assisted the Skowhegan office in providing holiday gifts to youth in their district. In June, July and August five families utilized the wonderful Tamarack Cottage in Rangeley over the summer. Thank you once again to Mary Higgins and Mary Henderson for making the use of the cottage available for the 15th straight year! Over 30 youth were supported to attend summer camps as a result of Amanda's efforts as the Special Events Coordinator. Over 100 tickets to fairs and other family events were provided to resource families throughout the state.

AFFM assisted families in celebrating May as Foster Care Month with its annual Foster Day at the Fort. Fort Knox was the site of the 8th annual picnic and family day. Nearly 400 individuals attended the event on a bright sunshiny day. Watch your newsletter for information about plans for this year's Foster Day at the Fort.

Bette has assisted in numerous Family Team Meetings. If you feel the need to have someone attend one of these important meetings with you, feel free to call and ask for a staff to accompany. Throughout this past year AFFM has made free or reduced rates available to resource families to take part in various family programs. These events included but were not limited to; passes to state fairs, Maine Children's Museums, apple and pumpkin picking events, theater tickets, tickets to Sesame Street Live and much more. AFFM also provided season park passes to over 400 licensed foster families. AFFM provided nearly 500 reduced entrance passes to the Wild Life Park in Gray. If you have not made a request in the past AFFM hopes you will do so again, if not consider planning a trip to include one or more of these wholesome family activities in 2012.

If you have suggestions for other family entertainment that AFFM might contact to expand the resource, please give us a call.

Many of you have been able to take advantage of the various in-kind programs provided by AFFM. In the past year AFFM has recycled and or provided new items to over 200 families. Items provided included, beds, mattresses box springs, linens, dishes, portable cribs, youth beds, flatware, pots and pans, clothes, toys and assorted pieces of furniture. AFFM has distributed literally thousands of new children's books as well. A few youth received 3 wheeled bikes compliments of the Admiral's Inn. Dave McCullough repaired a number of bikes that were also donated to kids in care. Thank again to Toys for Tots who provided more than a fair share of items that AFFM provided to youth celebrating birthdays.

Many thanks go to our partners at Bed Bath and Beyond, Pottery Barn, Home Depot and Admiral's Inn in Ogunquit, and Seafarer Inn in Ogunquit and Books a Million in Bangor. Please don't hesitate to call us if you have new or gently used items to donate or if you are in need of items we can provide.

I have saved the best for last, although it out of sequence with the reviews. In July we were informed that this office would be put out to bid. AFFM submitted an RFP and won the bid. Some serious changes are occurring as a result. Sadly, we will no longer be partnering with Maine Kids-Kin but we will take on the work they had provided to kinship parents along with us for the past 13 years. There are several changes that come with the new contract. One significant addition is that of new staff members. AFFM has added a new Kinship Specialist, Sheila Peakall has taken the place vacated by Nicole O' Roak as she moved on to be closer to her children. Sheila comes with a wealth of knowledge of the foster care system and is well informed from her prior position as an in-home health aid of the needs of the senior population. She is delighted to combine her two areas of expertise and we are delighted to have her here at AFFM. AFFM has also added a new Family Resource Specialist. Jim Hatch also brings with him a wealth of personal and professional expertise as a Resource Parent and as a foster care specialist. We hope to hire a full time Training Coordinator in early January.

I extend a very special thank you to our Board of Directors; without their expertise and careful planning this association would not exist. The Board grew this past year with the additions of Janalee Moquin of York, Jon Fisk of Waterville and Heidi Krieger of Portland.

AFFM continues its work with Maine Steps and to enhance the Family Partner Program. Thank you, to Carolyn Sawyer, Shirley Melancon and Joan Jewett for their time and dedication to this very important work!

The Family Ties newsletter has grown under the direction of Community Resource Development Coordinator, Meagan Stearns. Meagan has also met the challenge of assisting in the coordination and delivery of the AFFM/NEFCA conference, an event at the Hall of Flags during National Adoption Awareness Month and a delightful adoption tea at the Blaine House. Meagan is active on several foster care related committees.

Cindy Lilley our administrative specialist *and yet another unpaid delivery master*, keeps our books and records straight and keeps us aware of the need to be frugal in our spending. I jokingly called her our *delivery master* as she, like the former Administrative Specialist Sindy, often uses her own time to make deliveries of furniture to families in obscure locations across the state. Cindy is strong and not afraid to lift and shuffle to insure that families making requests of AFFM do not go without.

Mary Lake and Debbie Irish continue to be steadfast in their support and contributions of handmade wares and so much more! As always thank you never seems quite adequate for all the blessings that are provided.

AFFM extends a special thank you to Marilyn Hoxie who donated numerous pairs of mittens and several hats that she knit over the summer. The hats and mittens are keeping lots of young people warm this winter.

Thank you to all who have assisted in so very many ways throughout this past year. We at AFFM look forward to expanding to meet your needs and to serving you with quality and dignity.

Have a happy, safe and love filled New Year!

GROWING WITH OUR ADOPTED CHILDREN

A Four part Coaching Group for Parents With Adopted children

If you are a parent of an adopted child any age, either domestic or international, please consider joining us. You will meet other adoptive parents and we will explore issues relevant to raising our children. A coaching group is supportive, pro-active and fun with discussions and exercises that invite exploration of issues such as racial identity, birth parents, cultural heritage, beginning of life stories, siblings and more.



We will meet in the cozy and comfortable Birthroots, right on State Street in Portland with plenty of on street parking .

Contact Anne Belden to register abelden@me.com or 233-5939

When:	January 14, 28, February 11, 25 at 6:30-8:00 pm
Where:	Birthroots, 101 State Street, Portland
Who:	facilitated by Anne Belden, MS, ACC
How Much:	\$100 for the series, \$175/couple



anne brennan belden
COACHING
MS, ACC

Meet the Staff of AFFM!

Sheila Peakall, Kinship Support Specialist

On November 13th AFFM welcomed our new Kinship Support Specialist, Sheila Peakall. Sheila comes to us with a background of growing up in Foster care for 10 years and also having a kinship provider for 4 years. Her experience from growing up “in the system” will help her relate to both the caregiver and the children. She brings to the position a wealth of knowledge of the foster care system. Sheila is also well informed from her prior position as an in-home health aid of the needs of the senior population.

Sheila enjoys the outdoors, reading, doing crafts, and spending time with family and friends. She is a mother of two and the proud grandmother of her eight week old grandson, Logan. Sheila is happy to be a part of AFFM and looks forward to working with families.

Sheila can be contacted at sheila@affm.net

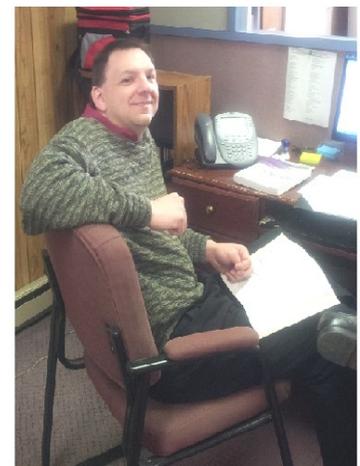


Jim Hatch, Family Resource Specialist

AFFM wishes to introduce you to Jim Hatch. Jim is a licensed social worker and has a Master’s degree in business, specializing in non-profit management. He comes to us with a wealth of knowledge and experience working with children and their families. Jim has been working with children with special needs since 1994. Jim is a foster care specialist. He supports the needs of children and just as importantly advocates strongly for the needs of their resource parent(s) and supports maintaining connections with birth family when ever possible. In addition to Jim working in the field, Jim and his wife Teri are adoptive parents and have been providing family and therapeutic foster care since 2007.

Jim serves as our Family Resource Specialist. He is one of the staff that answers your phone calls and emails providing you with support to help meet your important needs. As AFFM continues to grow and evolve, Jim’s role will evolve as well. Jim will likely be attending state-wide committee meetings and take on a variety of direct support and behind the scene tasks.

Jim can be contacted at jim@affm.net



Opportunity for York County Youth, ages 16 & above

Work Readiness Workshops

York County Foster Care Collaborative (YCFCC) is partnering with Voc-Rehab, Goodwill Industries and local businesses to offer work readiness workshops for youth in foster care, adopted, or in permanent guardianship in York County.

Youth should:

- Reside in York County
- Be Age 16+
- Be self-motivated to learn about how to apply & interview for employment

Youth will:

- receive a \$20 stipend for attending each of the workshops
- Be entered into a raffle for a \$100 gift certificate if he/she attends all 5 workshops
- be provided with snacks during each session
- have the chance to participate in a mock interview with York County employers
- be provided with information about summer employment



When: January/February 2013

3:30pm—5:30pm

Where: TBA based on location of youth

Workshops will be held:

Tuesday January 15, 2013

Tuesday January 22, 2013

Tuesday January 29, 2013

Tuesday February 5, 2013

Tuesday February 12, 2013 (snow date Feb 26)

Data from 2012 Cohort:

- 86% of participants attended all 4 sessions
- Of the 14 attendees, 9 found summer employment
- 83% reported feeling more comfortable with applications and interviewing

Send referral information to Dulcey Laberge—dulcey.laberge@maine.gov

- Youth name, age, phone and/or email contact information **BY DECEMBER 7, 2012**

The York County Foster Care Collaborative is part of the statewide Maine Youth Transition Collaborative

Upcoming Training

Coping with Caregiver Grief and Loss in Foster Care

Facilitated by Robin Sprague

Foster parents provide their children with love and protection. By nature this involves hopes and dreams for the child and for our relationship with the child. Yet these relationships, though crucial, are often transitional and involve loss on both sides. This workshop will explore the stages or “tasks” of grieving after a child leaves your foster home, including the signs of grief, “simple” vs. complicated grief. The workshop will discuss ways of protecting our hearts while remaining open to the healing power of positive attachment.

Robin K Sprague, LCPC has counseled children and families in the Bangor area for 29 years. She has also served as a Hospice Chaplain and Bereavement Coordinator, providing support and education around issues of grief and loss, as well as trauma. In this capacity she has taught classes and done radio and T.V. interviews. She is also the co-author of The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids with child psychologist Dr. Lawrence Shapiro and currently maintains a private practice.

DATE: Tuesday, February 12, 2013

Snow Date: Thursday, February 14, 2013

TIME: 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

LOCATION: Community Health and Counseling
Services (CHCS)
42 Cedar Street. Bangor

SORRY, NO CHILDCARE AVAILABLE

2 Credit Hours Available to Foster Parents

Please RSVP by February 6, 2013
to Meagan Stearns at 1-800-833-9786
or email: meagan@affm.net

Kinship Corner



The holiday parties have come and gone and AFFM would like to thank all those who made the events a success this year.

Thank you to the Ramada Inn in Bangor for once again hosting, the pool is always a highlight of the event! Thank you to those who provided food and the festive door prizes!

Thank you Portland YMCA for another great year and Domino's for providing pizza for all who attended.

Thank you Bill & Karen Labombarde for bringing huge smiles to the faces of the youth as well as the adults.

*We look forward to seeing you again next year!
Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year from AFFM!*

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National Foster Parent Association

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PUBLISHED WITH SUPPORT FROM THE MAINE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES. PLEASE DIRECT COMMENTS TO: EDITOR, FAMILY TIES,
AT THE ADDRESS ABOVE.

***Among the changes of AFFM, starting January 1st, 2013 the
Family Ties Newsletter will be produced annually
rather than monthly.***

***AFFM understands many Resource Families rely on the
newsletter for upcoming trainings, events, and information.
Therefore in addition to the annual newsletter, AFFM will
produce a news bulletin 6 times per year which will be online
and will also be mailed in a hard copy to families who indicate
they do not have access to a computer to gain information
through technology.***