

AFFM Year In Review

Happy New Year to all!

I can hardly believe that once again I am sitting down to contemplate what AFFM has accomplished in the past year and what we look forward to in this 2011.

It has been a year filled with more highs then lows so all in all it has been a good year! I hope our reader's and all who took part in AFFM sponsored events also found that to be true. As always it has been our pleasure and honor to serve you.

In November AFFM participated in or initiated several Adoption Awareness events. Events included the wonderful Adoption Tea at the Blaine House which was attended by more families than ever! It also included 2 adoption legalizations one at the Bangor Children's Museum and one at the Children's Museum in Portland. If an adoption is in your family's future consider legalizing in November and you may well take part in the enjoyment of these very special adoption celebrations! The last Sunday in November and the first Sunday in December were dedicated per usual to the AFFM sponsored holiday parties. The events grow larger and more fun each year!

Also AFFM was delighted with the generosity of the Spirit of Giving Committee, Verizon, Old Town Methodist Church, Bangor Baptist church, Toys for Tots, Marie Barbieri, Debbie Irish, and Mary Lake, the staff at DHHS Central Office in Augusta, and the amazing staff and volunteers at AFFM who provided holiday gifts to over 550 children in Resource Families across the state. AFFM also provided gifts to several birth families through its collaborative with the Child Steps Project. There were times when we thought we just could not say "Yes" to another child" but miraculously each time we got to that point a donor would appear and fill the gap. It is this writer's opinion that doing the right thing for the right reasons carries with it an abundant supply of miracles!

The early fall found AFFM scrambling to deal with the threat of no longer maintaining the contract with DHHS. Fortunately, it was sustained until this coming spring. The contract will be sent out as it should be for a response to a Request for Proposals. It is the hope of the Board of Director's and the staff and management that we will respond in a way that is all that is requested and more and we will continue our work in the manner we have established. If that does not turn out to be the case, AFFM will continue as an as-association and will strive to meet needs on a much more limited budget and with an even smaller staff. In any event the quality of the

Summer was a busy season as well. AFFM provided over 400 passes to fairs and social events across the state. 175 individuals received passes to Storyland in NH. State park passes were provided to over 300 licensed resource homes, day passes were issued to museums in Portland, Bangor and Augusta, and hundreds received reduced rates to spend a day at the wonderful Wild Life Park in Gray, Maine. The early spring was filled with requests for summer camps. With donated funds from very kind benefactors, AFFM was able to assist over 35 families who had fallen on difficult times with such things as deposits for summer camps, rent and utility payments and food and diapers.

This month's Family Ties

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AFFM was also able with assistance of Carole Auger-Richard, a runner from Southern Maine with a love for Maine's youth, to provide 3 former youth in care with funds to assist in their transition from foster care to independent living. (Please note it is the wish of this office as well as DHHS to reduce the number of youth who exit the system without a permanent family so those funds will one day not be needed!) AFFM also had funds to share from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative that assisted another group of youth in similar circumstances. 27 youth residing with Resource Families were assisted in attending summer camps. AFFM was able to locate and negotiate scholarships that either provided all or a portion of the funding. When needed AFFM also assisted in getting the camping gear necessary for the camps.

Gift certificates, tickets to Sesame Street Live, two UMO football games, are also among the many ways AFFM was able to assist Resource Families in the past year.

The highlight of AFFM's fabulous year had to be the conference at the breath taking and beautiful Point Look Out Convention Center in Northport... The weather smiled fondly on over 260 participants. The conference, History without Mystery, was both a wonderful training opportunity and it provided many opportunities for families to get to know one another and share their similar experiences. Child care and or respite care provided for the first time ever by AFFM was certainly a great advantage to the families who attended. The day care providers were second to none in their expertise and caring of so many very special children.

The day care and respite were possible through the generosity of a grant from the Casey Foundation and another grant from AdoptUS Kids. Replicating that event is unlikely this year. However, plans are well under way for the 2011 conference and it will be an amazing event. It just won't be held in such a peaceful and beautiful location. *For you who are curious the conference will be held in the Bangor area and will feature the dynamic, energetic and inspirational Josh Shipp. The dates for the conference will be April 29 and 30, 2011. Mark your calendars and make your child care arrangements early!*

A week after the conference in June of 2010, in spite of a memorably rainy day, the Foster Family Day at the Fort at FT Knox State Park and Historic Site was a huge success. Over 200 people braved a chilly and rainy day with no breaks in the clouds to participate in a hot dog picnic, enhanced by steamy coffee, soda, juice, bottled water, desserts and loads of fun in the form of games, face painting, craft building and gifts and/or prizes for one and all!

AFFM was fortunate to take part in numerous training events during the past year. Ed Ford represented AFFM at the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA) Conference in May and Bette Hoxie accompanied by, Board member Tammy Cutchen's, Resource Development Coordinator, Meagan Stearns and Child Steps Family Partner; Joan Jewett represented AFFM at the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) in August. Bette provided training at the NACAC conference. Bette and Meagan also represented AFFM at the New England Foster Parent Association conference in Sturbridge, MA. in October.

AFFM Director Bette Hoxie and Jane Drake, Program manager for the Out of Home Investigation Unit also provided Allegation Prevention Training in several settings across the state. Bette had the good fortune to provide training to DHHS staff on the advantages and challenges of kinship care. The later training was made possible with funds from the Maine Kinship Connections Grant. The Grant is a collaborative between DHHS, Families and Children Together, Casey Family Services and the Maine Center on Aging.

A recent change has occurred at AFFM. We were all sad that Ed Ford who had been the Resource Development Coordinator resigned. We are, happy however that he was able to take on a new position as a legislative policy aide at the State capitol. We will miss him but look forward to his continued involvement in AFFM as a traditional member extraordinaire! Is that an oxymoron?? Probably but you all understand.

AFFM is pleased that its work with the Child Steps Program continues. The Family Partners, Carolyn Sawyer, Shirley Melancon and Joan Jewett have been exemplary in their peer support of parents of children with mental health issues.

AFFM responds to an average of 20 calls and 150 emails per day on a slow day. We do this with a full time Administrative Assistant our wonderful and gracious, Sindy Roberts, our slightly overly conscientious Resource Development Coordinator, Meagan Stearns, (teasing Meagan) the very cheerful, Seasonal Activities Coordinator, Stephanie Damboise, and ever eager volunteer Dawn Gosson and yours truly Executive Director, Bette Hoxie. We have also had the good fortune to have had two student interns this past year. Emily Underwood, our dynamic and personable intern, provided us with numerous reasons to smile as she consistently became lost while looking for locations we all thought obvious! She is from a small community in MA. She was here just for the summer but was essential to me as I began the process of establishing the training events for DHHS. Our most recent intern, Amanda Keegan is nothing if not eager to learn and to share what she knows on many social welfare issues and she is particularly interested in all that pertains to kinship adoptions. She has been a huge assistance to us all and as she moves forward with her academics we will miss her. (We are proud to say she got an A on her Intern portfolio!).

A new comer to our staff is Nicole O'roak. Nicole is a social worker and has strengths in kinship care as well as adoption and foster care. We are proud to add her to the staff and hope you will stop by or call or email to make her feel welcome.

A survey shared in the Family Ties last spring was well responded to and gave lots of ideas on ways we can improve and lots of thanks for things people have appreciated and hope to see us continue. We are reading and listening and hope you will continue to provide us with feed back on what works and what does not.

I CAN NOT FORGET TO TELL YOU WHAT A WONDERFUL Board of Directors you have. This office extends a sincere thank you to the entire Board. The Board of Directors provides supervision and guidance to me, and nearly all of the members at any given time are doing things that benefit all of you.

AFFM is working with a small and hopefully growing group that plans to educate the new legislature about the issues of foster care, adoption and kinship care during Foster Care Month in May of this year. Thank you to Jo Bradeen at SMART for getting AFFM involved. For information on how you can get participate please call 1-800-833-9786.

I could go on and on but time and space just do not permit. I have hit the tip of the iceberg and hopefully have provided you with a few smiles and some idea of what the days are like here for the staff and management of AFFM as well as what we attempt to do to keep you well informed and actively involved in all phases of resource family and child welfare issues.

Again we wish you and yours a very happy healthy and prosperous New Year!

Upcoming Trainings

Reconnecting Youth with Birth Families

Birth Family Reconnections: A Walk of Faith and Hopes for Healing

Facilitators: Nancy Larson, LCPC and Bonny Dodson, LCSW

Many youth who have entered the child welfare system have been cut off from their birth parents and extended family. Even after years of stability and adoption, many youth still grieve this loss and yearn to know more about their birth families. Some youth are never able to achieve stability due to these unresolved issues. Research has shown that many youth seek out their birth families as young adults. We are also finding that in this information age, more and more youth are taking the initiative on their own to reconnect in their teen years. This training will focus on how to support youth with their birth family reconnections through family finding, safety planning, preparation work, family therapy and teaming. We will explore the impact of this work on the youth, foster, adoptive and birth families.

Anne Belden, of Sea Changes Life Coaching (also president of Hardy Girls, Healthy Women, and an adoptive mother of a teen daughter from China) will be facilitating a 3-part series of discussion groups designed to create a safe space for adopted girls ages 13-16 to celebrate who they are becoming and to explore how to successfully navigate their changing world.

The series will meet 1/24, 2/15 and 3/21 at 5:00-6:30pm at Maine Med's Dana Center in Portland. Cost is \$40 for the series. Early registration is suggested; slots are limited.

For more information or to register, interested families can contact Anne directly at abelden@me.com or call her at 207-233-5939.

**Please RSVP by February 11th to Debbie Rossignol
at 1-866-662-2739 OR 973-2491**

Email: drrossignol@caseyfamilyservices.org

Training Date: February 16, 2011

Snow Date: February 17, 2011

Time: 6:30 PM-8:30 PM

Location: Community Health & Counseling Services

42 Cedar Street Bangor, Maine

***Sorry No Child Care Available**

***2 Training hours available for Foster Parents**



**For more upcoming trainings check out AFFM's
Calendar of Events on the website www.affm.net**

Kinship

Corner

AARP Offering Online Database of Support and Services for Kin Caregivers

A new online database can help grandparents and other relatives raising kin children to find support and services. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Foundation has launched the Grandcare Support Locator, which allows kinship caregivers to search for specific types of groups and services within their state or jurisdiction. Using the online search form, users can search within their zip code to find services (childcare, health care, respite care, newsletters) or support groups (in-person, telephone support, or online). Users can limit the search to Spanish or English language results, and they can restrict the search to items relevant to grandparents raising grandchildren or to grandparents experiencing visitation issues. Find the free searchable database on the AARP website. www.giclocalsupport.org/pages/search_form.cfm



Casey Family Services Announces Openings

Services for Families Formed through Adoption and Guardianship in Maine

Now accepting referrals for Targeted Case Management and Outpatient Counseling

In Bangor contact: Bonny

Dodson

bdodson@caseyfamilyservices

.org

207.973.2491

In Portland contact:

Heather Dunbar

hdun-

bar@caseyfamilyservices.o

rg

Casey Family Services has over 10 years of experience working with post adoptive and guardianship families. Our Masters-level staff have advanced training and experience in adoption, guardianship and trauma-related issues.

Targeted Case Management

- Offered to children adopted from the child welfare system or in permanency guardianship through the Maine court system.
- Assessment, service planning, connections to community supports, and oversight of service delivery for children with an emphasis on supporting the whole family.
- Children must be enrolled in Maine-Care.



THE DIRECT SERVICE AGENCY OF
THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

Outpatient Counseling

- For children adopted through Maine's child welfare system, in a guardianship situation, or in a family with a plan to adopt.

Casey's clinicians are trained in parent-child therapy as well as trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, an effective treatment for children who have experienced abuse,

www.facebook.com/caseyfamilyservices

www.caseyfamilyservices.org

www.twitter.com/caseyfamily

Adoptive and Foster and Kinship Families,
Collaborative of Bangor DHHS
district 6

Great Skates

February 22nd

11am-1pm

Included: Admission and Skate rentals, 1 slice of pizza/drink per child

For more information and registration call Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine

@ 1-800-833-9786 OR (207) 827-2331



THANK YOU

A huge thank you to the Spirit of Giving Committee, Verizon, Old Town Methodist Church, Bangor Baptist Church, Toys for Tots, Marie Barbieri, Debbie Irish and Mary Lake, and The Staff at DHHS Central Office in Augusta who made it possible for over 550 children in Resource Families across the state to have holiday gifts!



My Life Story

1. Here's the truth!
2. I was adopted when I was five months old. I was in two foster homes before that. My birth mother had me at sixteen. She gave me up for adoption because she couldn't take care of me. My mom thought that my dad was the only one who loved her. She chose him over me. Yes, it's sad, very. So, I got adopted.
3. Life then
4. I got adopted into my family and got two brothers and two sisters. I was the baby of the family. I was very little to know that I was adopted even though my parents told me all the time.
5. Life now
6. Now, I bet you want to know about life now. I'm twelve. I found out my real name and my birth parent's names. I found out why I couldn't be safe at home with them. I found out a lot of things. I can call my foster families and talk to them. I go to school, I have sisters and brothers, dogs and birds. I have a great life! But...
7. One thing I didn't know even though they told me all the time is how much my parents love me. now that I think about it— they hold me tight, they have a shoulder to cry on, they protect me from any harm. I still didn't believe it until one night I told my dad, "I'm scared, I'm scared all the time". He asked me why and I told him because I feel like my birth dad is around me, watching me, getting ready to snatch me. I was crying hard, but then he said
8. The reply
9. "Amy, no one is ever going to take you away. Your birth father has no clue where you are, he won't ever. I won't ever let anyone take you away because I would find you because I love you". Those words, who could ever forget, I know I won't. His voice was strong when mine was weak.
10. How could I not know? I can't believe I couldn't know how much they care. But a friend told me that the Bible has the answer. And she told me about a friend of hers that was abused and then got in a foster family and was abused and neglected and then even got adopted and was still abused and neglected. She read her Bible and memorized it. Her adopted parents took away her Bible because they found out that's what made her strong but she was still strong because she had those memorized verses in her head. And she had no one to call Mom, or Dad, sister or brother, Grampa or Gram. But, I do. I am so grateful. When I think of that story it still makes me happy.
11. Because I think of how life would have been and I wouldn't have been happy. I wouldn't have the smile I always have. I would not probably have the right family. I should have thought about how much they loved me.
12. Sometimes I wish that I was still living with my birth parents and sometimes I wish that I never was adopted. It's really hard being adopted.
13. If my wish did come true and I did live with birth parents then it would be wrong because I might ruin God's plan for me.

14. What's life like now? Life now is good. What I did realize is that life is not all about me. It's about friends, it's mostly about family. If it wasn't, then you'd have no one to care about. I can't believe I was as disrespectful to my parents when I should have been thankful for the "parents" God gave me. That's what I did—I didn't care or love, I thought I had more important things on my mind. Why did I do that? Why didn't I care or even love? I guess I'll never know, I don't think anyone will know.

15. What do I think about every second? Why my birth mom chose my birth dad over me. That's a tough thing to live with. Honestly, trying to live with knowing that is really hard, really, really. Something that no person would want to live with knowing. Sometimes I hate my birth mom but when I think like that then I feel so terrible. I don't know why I would say such a thing about my mother. Who would even want to think about hating someone. But, the problem is we're humans, people are always going to say that stuff. And what if some ever hurt you? They'd be upset, yet alone and very sad. I know she loves me. Sometimes I think that she doesn't but I know that she does. She has since I was born.

16. I was weak when I think about it I am almost always in tears. But talking about it almost always makes things better. I guess letting feelings out helps. I always talk to my parents about it though. Like when I was scared of my birth dad and I thought he was always near me, just waiting to grab me. when I talk about it, it gets better, well at least a little.

For now, I'm just going to live with the fact that I'm adopted. But I think about my parents everyday which is okay I guess. I just have to remind myself that I'm okay and I have a family and mainly I am me.

17. I can still think about it everyday. There's no problem with that, knowing what happened or not knowing about what's going to happen in the future. I shouldn't be worried. I should never be worried about anything. Because, I have a good life.

By,
Amy, age 12

January Adoption Profile-Shelby



Shelby (1/1996) is beautiful young lady with blonde hair and hazel eyes, who is in need of a committed and nurturing adoptive family. She is personable, fun and inquisitive. Shelby enjoys gardening, being outdoors, riding her bike and horseback riding.

Shelby likes to read and can become very animated when reading aloud. Shelby also likes to write stories. She is a very deep thinker and loves to challenge herself with new thoughts and information. She is a very sensitive child and often seeks adult approval. Shelby loves to sing and dance. She likes to be helpful in the house and during meal times. She spent this summer working in a program where they did landscaping at a local Veteran's Hospital, which she really enjoyed.

Shelby receives special education services and is currently in a day treatment setting. She often needs help with peer social interactions and is working on boundaries and maintaining friendships. When doing new things or meeting new people, she is bashful and very timid.

Shelby would do best with a two parent family who could provide a high level of supervision, structure and routine balanced with nurturance. She has expressed that she would like her two parents to both be female, as she feels more comfortable with women. Her parents will need to be supportive and continue to involve Shelby in activities that interest her. It would be best if she could be the youngest child in a family, where she could receive lots of attention. There are times when she will become jealous of others and needs help processing her feelings. She will need intense, consistent, long term therapy to address the impact of severe trauma and attachment issues. Shelby's family will need to actively participate in therapy with her to assist in building a healthy attachment.

Adoption subsidy may be available for the most appropriate family. Interested families should contact Erin Boucher, 200 Main St., Lewiston, ME 04240 or call (207) 795-4646.



Squeaky Wheel Adventures is a tripping camp for Maine kids in foster care, other out-of-home care and children that have been adopted. Winter Trip

This international trip is sure to please with amazing sights and a heart pumping finale. We will travel by van to the Province of Quebec Canada where we will be staying in a beautiful condo at Les Chalets Alpin in Stoneham, QC about 20 minutes north of Quebec City. This condo will serve as our basecamp over the next couple of days as we explore the area. On the second day we will visit picturesque Old Quebec City, the icy falls of Chutes de Montmercy and, if time allows, the Basilica of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré.

Our final day we take on the "largest winter playground in America". Village Vacances Valcartier is tubing and *SNOW RAFTING* like you have never seen before. Similar to a downhill ski mountain, you will be pulled up the mountain by one of 17 lifts and come sliding down on your choice of several types of...vehicles, including a 12 person river raft! This place is a ton of fun and we are thrilled to be including it on this trip.



**February 23rd - 25th
Price - \$340**

This trip is **limited to 6 campers with 3 staff**. Registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis to **Maine children in foster care, other out-of-home care and adopted** between the ages of 10 to 17 (age exception made case by case). Trip fees can often be paid in full, or in-part, by DHHS allocated camp funding. Please contact your caseworker ASAP and let them know you are interested. There may also be post adoption funds available. There are multiple pick-up locations for this trip. **For more information and to check availability visit www.SqueakyWheelAdventures.org/winter/ or call 207.664.0233.**

CANADIAN / US CUSTOMS REQUIREMENTS - Camper will need either their original birth certificate or notarized copy of their birth certificate and a signed permission letter from parent or guardian (provided by SWA).

Families And Children Together
Maine
Kids & Kin
Celebrating 10 years of service to Maine grandfamilies

When you go to a group meeting you get a chance to connect with other grandfamilies by sharing stories and information, offering support and listening to each other. Some group meetings provide childcare, and this gives the children an opportunity to meet and socialize with other children in similar situations.

January Meetings

Augusta

Group Meeting - Wednesday, January 19th at 6:00 pm, The Children's Center, 1 Alden Drive. Please call Meaghan at 1-866-298-0896 in advance for childcare.

Bangor

Group Meeting – Tuesday, January 4th at 6:00 pm, Families And Children Together office, 304 Hancock Street. Please call in advance for childcare.

Group Meeting – Tuesday, January 18th at 6:00 pm, Families And Children Together office, 304 Hancock Street. Please call in advance for childcare.

Belfast

There will be no group meeting in January.
The next meeting will be Thursday, February 10th, 2011.

Dover-Foxcroft

Group Meeting – Monday, January 24th at 6:30 pm, Penquis, 50 North Street. Please call Maine Kids-Kin in advance for childcare.

Ellsworth

Group Meeting - Tuesday, January 11th from 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm, Downest Health Services, 52 Christian Ridge Road, Ellsworth. To register, contact Candy Eaton at 667-5304 ext. 261.

Lewiston

Group Meeting – Wednesday, January 5th at 6:30 pm, in LePage Small Hall at St. Mary's Regional Medical Center.

Machias

Group Meeting - Tuesday, January 4th from 10:00 am - 12:00 noon, Downest Health Services, 247 Main Street, Machias. To register, contact Candy Eaton at 667-5304 ext. 261.

Portland

Group Meeting – Wednesday, January 12th at 6:00 pm, The Family Workshop, 215 Congress Street. Please call Nancy in advance to reserve childcare.

Group Meeting – Wednesday, January 26th at 6:00 pm, The Family Workshop, 215 Congress Street. Please call Nancy in advance to reserve childcare.

Sanford

Group Meeting for Grandparents and Grandfamilies – Wednesday, January 12th at 6:30 pm at the Trafton Senior Center, 19 Elm Street. For more information, please contact 457-0080.

Waterville

The Grandest Parents of All - Tuesday, January 18th at 5:00 pm, Educare, 56 Drummond Avenue. Childcare available and dinner served for the whole family. For more information and to register, contact Renee Randazzo at The Children's Center at 626-3497.

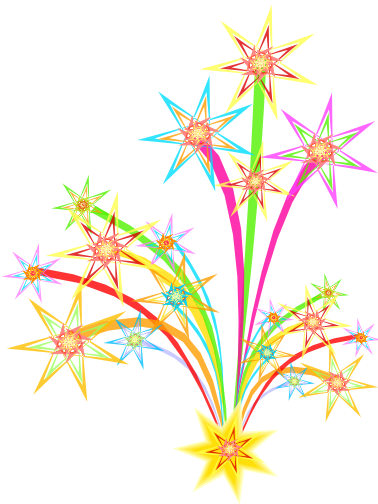
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PLEASE DIRECT COMMENTS TO: EDITOR, FAMILY TIES, AT THE ADDRESS ABOVE.

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Happy New Year!