



Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine

Volume 15 Number 1

Newsletter

January 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 23, 2011. The gigantic effort, supplied gifts to well over 600 children... With so many requests this season getting all delivered to appropriate locations was a struggle but I can happily share that all the children on the many lists received their gifts in time for the holiday! Nicole, Meagan, Sindy, Sarah, Amanda, Alison, Erin and I now breathe a sigh of relief.

The thank you list to the many kind and generous donors is huge! Thank you sincerely to all who contributed to the joy of the special season.

I count among my blessings this holiday season wonderful and skilled staff and a couple of Board members. All who took on a huge endeavor and smiled through some awkward and frustrating moments and in the end valued completely the wonderful Spirit of Giving both figuratively and in practice. 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 8 years ago. The giving practice has grown so much that even with the Spirit of Giving Committee providing gifts to over 400 children in our program, AFFM still needed to find sponsors for another 200 plus 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 to show them just how much their time, treasure and talents were appreciated. Many of us were able to hand gifts to families and viewed firsthand 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.

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. A potluck provided by attendees was scrumptious and plentiful 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 Portland guests feasted on pizza and holiday cookies. A good time was had by all who attended each of these annual events.

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 concern, the numbers of kinship families becoming members of AFFM has increased dramatically. AFFM is working diligently to increase opportunities for traditional Resource Families (foster 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. When kinship and traditional Resource Parents work together the likelihood of healthy outcome is increased.

November was Adoption Awareness Month. A tea co-hosted by Governor Paul LePage and First Lady, Ann LePage and AFFM was held at the Blaine House. The turnout was wonderful and the stories shared amazing! Maine is doing a good job of getting children to permanency. AFFM hosted an event at the Hall of Flags. The entertainment was fabulous. (Though it did nearly get us removed from the Hall of Flags as the musical accompaniment got a bit louder than anticipated) Jason and Matthew Tardy (AKA The Two) provided wonderful magic tricks, feats of body movements that were outstanding and phenomenal juggling. Ashley told her wonderful pre-adoption story using a video she has developed and set to music. Ashley hopes to be on the annual adoption program, [A Home for the Holidays](#) next year as she will be legalized in adoption by the first of the New Year. (Congratulations to Ashley and her forever family.) AFFM and several private foster care placing agencies provided lots of door prizes to families and friends attending the Hall of Flag event.

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.

This Month's Family Ties:

Year in Review Cont'd 2

Year in Review Cont'd 3

Meet the Staff 3

Growing Up With Grandma 4

York County Youth Summer Employment 4

Upcoming Trainings 5

Recognition Letter 5

TFC Agency of the month 6

Kinship Corner 6

Adoption Announcements 7

Casey Family Services Announcement 7

In September one of Maine's grandmother's represented Maine at an annual grandfamily rally in Washington DC. Later in the fall the same grandmother spoke to the Committee in Washington DC to advocate for legislation that will be meaningful for kinship families.

Over the summer we were all saddened to lose a very special friend of youth in care and a colleague of many years. Janice Brown was an adoption worker extraordinaire' and will be sadly missed by all who knew and loved her. In her memory AFFM has created their backpack of the month recognition. A backpack is sent to one youth in care each month in an effort to honor Janice's memory in a special way. This was a practice Janice began.

AFFM took part in the Annual Children's Day Parade. AFFM along with friends from EMMC ER and Bangor Savings Bank assisted children in decorating their bikes and riding in the parade. This was AFFM's 6th year of participating and as always it was fun (though hot)!

Five families were able to use the wonderful Tamarack Cottage in Rangeley over the summer. Thanks so much to Mary Higgins and Mary Henderson for making the use of the cottage available for the 14th straight year!

August also brought a miracle to AFFM in the form of a financial award from Wal-Mart. The funds are being used to provide a minimal amount of respite and to augment costs of summer camps for children in kinship placements next summer and to enhance the annual training conference.

The AFFM conference which usually takes place in April will be held October 11, 12 and 13, 2012 at the Hilton-Double Tree in Portland and will be a combination of New England Foster Care Association and AFFM event. Mark your calendars now and plan for your childcare. This training event promises to be the best one yet. Dr. Joseph Crumbley and Derek Clark are confirmed as two of the primary presenters. The extra financial resources and support of DHHS and each of the child welfare agencies in New England as well as the Maine Foster Family Treatment Association and the WalMart award will significantly add to the possibilities for this unique training experience. Keep in mind that AFFM can reimburse respite care to the first 25 Resource Providers that register.

Watch for the registration information in late Summer.

AFFM held its annual training conference in Orono last Spring and it was well attended with over 300 taking part. The conference Changing Times; Improving Heart and Mind, provided wonderful training as well as an occasion for Resource Parents and DHHS and private agency staff to network and commiserate on the many issues of foster care, adoption and kinship care.

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 7th annual picnic and family day. Over 200 hundred attended. Watch your newsletter for information about plans for this year's Foster Day at the Fort.

AFFM joined DHHS in spreading the word about "Extreme Recruitment" the latest and most innovative provision for recruiting permanent ties for youth entering or exiting the child welfare system.

Bette and Nicole have 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 one of the two to accompany you.

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 resources, 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.

Many thanks go to our partners at Bed Bath and Beyond, Pottery Barn, Home Depot and Admiral's Inn in Ogunquit, Black Bear Inn in Orono, and Seafarer Inn in Ogunquit and the former Border's Book store and most recently, Books A Million, (BAM).

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.

This exciting year also included bringing on a new full time staff person. Nicole O'Roak joined AFFM as the new Kinship Specialist and has integrated beautifully to the office and several committees that she leads and or participates in.

Amanda Keegan serves as the Seasonal Activities Coordinator. Amanda was instrumental in setting up a roller skating event last February, as well as the holiday parties. Among her many responsibilities, Amanda is wonderful at soliciting complimentary or reduced tickets and diligent about adding names addresses etc. to our mailing data base. We are happy to share that Amanda's hours have been increased which makes the workload easier for all of us!

AFFM also welcomed several volunteers to its list of helpers. Sarah Spade worked with us for over six months and has just recently departed to become a full time student of social work and mental health. Alison Mitchell is a student intern from UMO and has been helping to put together a replication manual of how AFFM and several other agencies were able to receive and collaborate to meet the terms of a federal grant for the Family Connections Project. Alison has also been instrumental in getting us a spot on television to promote our holiday campaign and assists with the newsletter and many other projects here in the office. Erin is the newest member of our volunteer team and has been extremely helpful in helping to get holiday gifts packaged and mailed. It is a pleasure to work with such a tremendous group of individuals.

I would be remiss if I did not say a special thank you to our Board of Directors; without their expertise and careful planning this association would not exist. AFFM also has added 3 special resource providers.

An increasingly positive relationship has grown between DHHS management and staff with AFFM this year. AFFM was delighted to meet with Commissioner, Mary Mayhew shortly after she took office. The Commissioner is eagerly learning all she can about the special kind of parenting provided by Resource Families and supports in all the ways possible (with limited financial resources) the good work done by so many! AFFM was also pleased to have several meetings with Bureau Director, Therese Cahill-Low and we were particularly pleased when she visited this office last month. She, like the Commissioner, is optimistic that working together we can find ways to get through these difficult economic times and continue to work together to assist Maine's children and their families and to promote healthy outcomes for children. AFFM was delighted to win a Request for Proposal to continue 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!

AFFM started the Fall school year off with a huge campaign called Ready Set Grow to Learn. Board members, Tammy Cutchen and Meghan Phainton were tireless in their efforts to insure Maine's foster children went back to school armed with the tools and clothing needed to make a great start. Over 200 youth received backpacks loaded with everything from pencils and crayons to Fall/Winter jackets.

The Family Ties newsletter has grown under the direction of Resource Development Coordinator, Meagan Stearns. Meagan has also met the challenge of assisting in the coordination and delivery of the AFFM 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 and also assists me with the planning New England Foster Care Association (NEFCA) conference for 2012 in Maine.

Sindy Roberts our administrative assistant *and unpaid delivery master*, married the man of her heart last May. Sindy is now happily married to Andy St. Laurent. Sindy 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 and Andy often use their own time to make deliveries of furniture to families in obscure locations across the state. Sindy is strong and not afraid to lift and shuffle items to insure that no family making requests of AFFM goes without. (None of this is in her job description). It is in her heart! Thanks, Sindy and Andy.

Sharon Cormier provided AFFM with an amazing gift last Summer. Sharon, a kidney transplant survivor and an adoptive parent, vowed after her successful transplant she'd find a way to give back. We were honored, with Sharon's help to be able to assist over 30 kids in attending Summer camp this past season and in a few cases provided for the required clothing and or equipment for their camping events.

I am sure I have left out some significant events but from this readers will understand what a busy office this is and the extent to which AFFM is able to provide education, training, one on one consultations, listening support, library materials and material goods to the many who call or come into the office.

Thank you to all who have assisted in so very many ways throughout this past year. We at AFFM look forward to serving you.

Have a happy, safe and love filled New Year!

Meet the Staff of AFFM!

Amanda Keegan is the Seasonal Activities Coordinator at AFFM. Amanda began her internship in August of 2010 and has recently transitioned into working part time. When Amanda is not at AFFM she is working towards her Bachelors Degree in Mental Health and Human Services at UMA Bangor, she will be graduating with her Associates in May. Amanda has previously worked as a CNA providing care to individuals in nursing homes and private settings. Amanda currently participates on various committees for AFFM, including the Community Partnership for Protecting Children (CPPC). Amanda is interested in providing insight to the needs of the community and being involved. Being a single parent to her seven year old daughter Kailey, she hopes that her experiences will help others see their potential. One of the strengths Amanda brings to AFFM is her clear image and commitment to her family both, birth and adoptive. Amanda is able to empathize with families, as she has experience growing up in kinship care.

In her spare time, Amanda enjoys living a healthy life style, exercising and taking nature walks with her daughter.



For York County Only:

York County Youth Summer Employment: 2012

Again this Summer, the York County Foster Care Collaborative (YCFCC) is working with local employers to identify possible Summer employment opportunities for youth in care and formerly in care in York County between the ages of 16-21. ***Please Note: This is not a supported employment program, but rather should be seen as a "linkage" opportunity to let youth in York County know about potential summer job openings that they can apply for.*** Last Summer through these efforts, 4 youth were hired for regular Summer jobs!

Youth to consider for this YCFCC Summer linkage employment opportunity:

- Youth who are self-motivated and could possibly find employment on their own, but could benefit from receiving a list of employment opportunities (*We hope to have list of employers who will be hiring for Summer by early February*)
- Youth who have completed HS or will be graduating & seeking employment AND/OR youth who have dropped out of college or ended their V-9 Agreement (*These youth may also qualify for additional WIA support for employment, or getting back to school*)
- Youth who may need some help in applying for jobs (mid to late February)
- Youth has adequate Summer supports, such as with transportation
- Youth who may require on-going workplace supports to succeed should be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

If you are or know of a youth in or formerly in foster care in York County, age 16-21, who meets the above criteria and would like to receive a list of potential employers hiring for Summer 2012, and to connect with members of the YCFCC as needed to discuss potential Summer employment, please provide youth's name/contact information to Dulcey Laberge, OCFS, at dulcey.laberge@maine.gov or (207) 624-7928.

The deadline is January 20, 2012.

The York County Foster Care Collaborative (YCFCC) is a team of various public and private agencies, youth in foster care and formerly in care, and many community members working together to improve the outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care—focusing on employment, education and housing. The YCFCC is part of the statewide Maine Youth Transition Collaborative (MYTC).

Growing Up With Grandma

I don't know when it happened.
I don't know when she came,
But, she's the one I always knew,
Grandma was her name.

She taught me how to tie my shoes.
She taught me how to talk.
And, though I can't remember,
I think she taught me how to walk.

When all the other kids in school
Would talk about Mom and Dad,
I wondered where my parents were,
That made me kinda' sad.

And, sometimes there were days I'd cry
Or hide my head in shame.
But Grandma took it all in stride,
And loved me all the same.

She'd wrap her arms around me,
And kiss me on the head.
She'd tell me that she loved me
When she tucked me into bed.

Being a teen, I remember the days
When being with friends was more fun.
And I wondered what it would have been like
To actually be someone's son.

To have a regular family
Some siblings, a mom, and a dad,
What had I done to deserve less than others?
Sometimes I felt so mad.

'It's alright, it's okay,' Grandma would say,
'One day you'll understand why,
Life just isn't fair to everyone you see.
It's always okay to cry.'

And when I went off to college,
I met the love of my life.
It was Grandma who was the first I told
That I planned to make her my wife.

Soon after I'd become a father,
For that I could hardly wait.
To have a child of my very own,
And, to make my Grandma a 'Great'.

A little girl to share her name,
For all that she'd given me.
So much I owed to Grandma,
That was plain to see.

As time passed and life grew short
I hoped my Grandma knew
That it was her love and her support
That always got me through.

If I could tell her one more thing
'Thanks Grandma', is what I'd say
For loving me and making me,
The man I am today.

Source: *Growing Up With Grandma, Adoption Poem* <http://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/growing-up-with-grandma#ixzz1giwaB4Xz>
Family Friend Poems



Upcoming Trainings



Cultural Competency in Foster Care and Adoption

Facilitated by: Judith Josiah-Martin

Director of the Multi-Cultural Programs at the Multicultural Center, University of Maine, Orono

Are you parenting a youth from a different race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background? This training will explore what cultural competency means in foster care. What are the levels of awareness resource parents need to have and what are the skill sets needed? How do you navigate the attachment dance with youth who have very different cultural norms related to attachment and assist youth in integrating their racial identities? These are very complex questions.

- Identify your area of strength in cultural sensitivity and ways to expand on your knowledge.
- Gain awareness of opportunity for growth in your cultural sensitivity with your youth

Parents will know what questions they need to be asking themselves and how to understand their child and the child's birth family through the lens of cultural competencies: resource parents will know what resources are available to help them answer their questions.

Workshop Date: Monday 1/23/12

Snow Date: Wednesday 1/25/12

Time: 6:30pm to 8:30pm

Location: Families and Children Together (F.A.C.T)

304 Hancock Street

Bangor, Maine 04401

Sorry, No Childcare Available

(2 Credit Hours Available to Foster Parents)

Please RSVP by 1/18/12 to Debbie Rossignol

At 974-1508 or 1-866-662-2739

Or e-mail drossignol@caseyfamilyservices.org

I received the letter in the mail informing us of Sue Harris's retirement. What--no Sue at the other end of the line or promptly returning emails! I know, Sue, that many join me in wishing you the best in your retirement! But, I also want you to know that your role as the primary contact to parents and guardians in the Adoption Assistance and Permanency Guardianship Program will be hard to replace. In the many years that we worked together, I felt respected as a parent and partner with you in supporting and caring for our children. Any question or concern was addressed in a timely and professional way. I hope you know that your assistance at times MADE a difference in supporting and keeping our family moving forward together, including those rough spots--even years, as we dealt with supports and systems to meet their needs. We will miss you and truly hope that your plans for the future return back to you many positive moments and memories.

—Bonnie B. Lovett

Featured Treatment Foster Care Agency of the Month:

*Each month AFFM will be offering Treatment Foster Care Agencies a chance to be featured in the Family Ties Newsletter. This is a great opportunity to get the word out to families about your agencies. Agencies will be featured at a first come, first serve basis. Please email agency information to meagan@affm.net



Woodfords Family Services has been in operation for 44 years. Our Therapeutic Foster Care program was established in 1999. The foster care team is located in Westbrook, and serves a large radius, including homes in York, Cumberland and Androscoggin Counties. The Woodfords Foster Care program provides excellent support and guidance to our foster parents; including: experienced case management, 24 hour on call support, respite, training and training stipend, in home support services, support groups and a library, to name a few. The Foster Care Program is able to access other Woodfords services, such as; Section 28 Services, consultation with our Behavioral Analyst, access to a psychiatrist, and the Developmental Preschool. To learn more about Woodfords Family Services or how to become a foster parent, please contact our Foster Care Recruitment and Licensing Coordinator, Beth Simmons, at 878-9663 (ext. 4160).

Kinship Corner



AFFM was able to provide holiday gifts for well over 600 children this year with the incredible generosity of the Spirit of Giving Committee and the following churches, businesses and individuals. AFFM couldn't have done it without you, thank you!!

- Broadway Hannaford
- Rene Steele, Jodi Veneziano, Emilie Bronson who put on Zumba for Toys
- United Bikers of Maine
- All Soul's Church
- Verizon
- Morgan Stanley
- Tammy Cutchen
- Poland Spring Academy
- United Church of Christ
- Iva Copeland for donating knitted hats of all sizes
- Toys for Tots
- American Legion
- Bridgton Alliance Church and Nancy Griggs
- Susan Fisher
- St. Paul's Parish
- Reba Parsons
- Anna Libby
- Big Lots
- United Church of Fellowship
- The Sprague family
- Bangor Baptist Church
- Mrs. Keib's class from Bangor Christian School
- Joanne St. Pierre
- Orono Dollar Tree
- Bangor's Redeemer Lutheran Church
- Milford Cheering Squad from Dr. Lewis S. Libby School

**A huge thank you to Maine Parent Federation, Biddeford DHHS, Portland Casey Family Services, Rockland DHHS, Skowhegan Community Care of Maine, Ellsworth DHHS, Houlton DHHS and Caribou DHHS for being the drop off site for the gifts.*

Adoption Announcements!

Dawn and Justin Wright are overjoyed to announce the adoption of Donovan age 6, Braydon age 3 and Nathaniel age 1 on October 28, 2011. The boys are welcomed by their five siblings Hailey age 15, Dakota age 14, Colby age 13, Riley age 8 and Laylah age 4.

CONGRATULATIONS



**Caledonia Jane is excited to announce the adoption
of her amazing**

big brothers, Zachary Aaron and Gabriel Michael.

Proud parents are Aaron and Brigid Torberg.



Casey Family Services Announces Openings

Services for Families Formed through Adoption and Guardianship

Now accepting referrals for Targeted Case Management and Outpatient Coun-

In Bangor contact: Bonny Dodson
bdodson@caseyfamilyservices.org
207.973.2491
866.662.2739 Toll Free

In Portland contact: Heather Dunbar
hdun-
bar@caseyfamilyservices.org

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 sup-



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

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National Foster Parent Association

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AT THE ADDRESS ABOVE.

