

# Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine

Volume 15 Number 8 & 9

Newsletter

August/September 2012



## Community Conversations A story that has just begun! Permanency Planning for Youth in Care

From March through June of this year, AFFM was happy to partner with our colleagues at DHHS, as well as the staff from the Muskie School of Public Services and several foster care placing agencies across



the state of Maine to provide an opportunity for Resource Parents to learn first-hand about the genuine need for all youth to be securely connected to a permanent family. Each of the Community Conversations were facilitated by one of two incredibly gifted individuals who both know and understand the need for permanency and who also have incredible strengths in facilitating healthy and productive discussions.

Each Community Conversation included a well prepared panel sharing personal and compelling stories of their journey with foster care and the ultimate match with a family. And then-- there were the stories from youth who have never gained permanency. Those youth left foster care without a permanent family or significant adult person in their lives. Their stories were amongst the most difficult to hear. Each story was a beginning. Each story shared, was told to help those who listened to begin to think and act in a positive way as plans are made for the youth who now live within this complex foster and adoptive care system move towards young adulthood. Lessons learned from the youth panelist, included but were not limited to the need to achieve permanency, continuing to have contact with biological family members (particularly siblings), and knowing who to turn to share a joy or diminish a fear were common themes.

From Presque Isle to Ogunquit and from Skowhegan to Rockland and Machias the conversations were similar. Parent providers worried that youth who had contact with biological parents and or other extended family members would be adversely influenced by inappropriate lifestyles or worse yet, run off never to be heard from again! Fear was a powerful motivator for many who had a hard time hearing from the young people on the panel as they told the lengths that they had gone through to be with biological parents or siblings. Some felt being with bio-family members was a mistake but it was one they had to make on their own. Those who had the luxury of someone to pick them up when they fell added to their huge learning curve and their sense of growth.

This Month's Family Ties:	
• Back to School Tips	2
• Adoption Profile • CASA Announcement	3
• Adoption Announcements • Kinship Corner	4
• Announcements • Save the Dates	5
• Support Group Listings	6
• MT Agencies Openings	7

Another Community Conversation will take place at the New England Foster Care Association on October 12, 13 and 14<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Portland. BJ Kitchin a former youth from the Maine foster care system will share his unique and inspirational story on Friday morning as part of Institute. 1. ([Abide in Love](#)) In the afternoon, Carole Martin will facilitate a group of parents/ and youth as they share their stories and include conference attendees in brainstorming how best to take what the panel has shared and use it towards the ultimate goal of finding a permanent parent/caregiver for every child prior to them exiting foster care. DHHS and AFFM are committed to widening the audience in future Community Conversations. In the next round of Community Conversations, educators, guardian ad litem and therapists will be included. It was essential that the caretakers of the youth, those who are with them 24/7 be in the first round of conversations. When plans are formed and dates set for the next Community Conversations AFFM will announce them in the Family Ties as well as on the affm.net website and the list serve.

Thank you to all who took the time to join in the initial round of discussions. We realize that the time lapse between events is difficult and we will do all that we can to make the next events occur as soon as possible.

## Before School Starts

**Review all of the information.** Review the material sent by the school as soon as it arrives. These packets include important information about your child's teacher, room number, school supply requirements, sign ups for after-school sports and activities, school calendar dates, bus transportation, health and emergency forms, and volunteer opportunities.

**Re-establish the bedtime and mealtime routines.** Plan to re-establish the bedtime and mealtime routines (especially breakfast) at least 1 week before school starts. Prepare your child for this change by talking with your child about the benefits of school routines in terms of not becoming over tired or overwhelmed by school work and activities. Include pre-bedtime reading and household chores if these were suspended during the summer.

**Turn off the TV.** Encourage your child to play quiet games, do puzzles, flash cards, color, or read as early morning activities instead of watching television. This will help ease your child into the learning process and school routine. If possible, maintain this practice throughout the school year. Television is distracting for many children, and your child will arrive at school better prepared to learn each morning if he or she has engaged in less passive activities.

**Visit school with your child.** If your child is young or in a new school, visit the school with your child. Meeting the teacher, locating their classroom, locker, lunchroom, etc., will help ease pre-school anxieties and also allow your child to ask questions about the new environment. Call ahead to make sure the teachers will be available to introduce themselves to your child.

## The First Week

**Set alarm clocks.** Have school-age children set their own alarm clocks to get up in the morning. Praise them for prompt response to morning schedules and bus pickups.

**Leave plenty of extra time.** Make sure your child has plenty of time to get up, eat breakfast, and get to school. For very young children taking the bus, pin to their shirt or backpack an index card with pertinent information, including their teacher's name and bus number, as well as your daytime contact information.

**After school.** Review with your child what to do if he or she gets home after school and you are not there. Be very specific, particularly with young children. Put a note card in their backpack with the name(s) and number(s) of a neighbor who is home during the day as well as a number where you can be reached. If you have not already done so, have your child meet neighbor contacts to reaffirm the backup support personally.

**Review your child's schoolbooks.** Talk about what your child will be learning during the year. Share your enthusiasm for the subjects and your confidence in your child's ability to master the content. Reinforce the natural progression of the learning process that occurs over the school year. Learning skills take time and repetition. Encourage your child to be patient, attentive, and positive.

**Send a brief note to your child's teacher.** Let the teachers know that you are interested in getting regular feedback on how and what your child is doing in school. Be sure to attend back-to-school night and introduce yourself to the teachers. Find out how they like to communicate with parents (e.g., through notes, e-mail, or phone calls). Convey a sincere desire to be a partner with your children's teachers to enhance their learning experience.

## Overcoming Anxiety

**Let your children know you care.** If your child is anxious about school, send personal notes in the lunch box or book bag. Reinforce the ability to cope. Children absorb their parent's anxiety, so model optimism and confidence for your child. Let your child know that it is natural to be a little nervous anytime you start something new but that your child will be just fine once he or she becomes familiar with classmates, the teacher, and school routine.

**Do not overreact.** If the first few days are a little rough, try not to over react. Young children in particular may experience separation anxiety or shyness initially but teachers are trained to help them adjust. If you drop them off, try not to linger. Reassure them that you love them, will think of them during the day, and will be back.

**Remain calm and positive.** Acknowledge anxiety over a bad experience the previous year. Children who had a difficult time academically or socially or were teased or bullied may be more fearful or reluctant to return to school. If you have not yet done so, share your child's concern with the school and confirm that the problem has been addressed. Reassure your child that the problem will not occur again in the new school year, and that you and the school are working together to prevent further issues.

**Reinforce your child's ability to cope.** Give your child a few strategies to manage a difficult situation on his or her own. But encourage your child to tell you or the teacher if the problem persists. Maintain open lines of communication with the school.

## Adoption Profile: Meet Joshua

### JOSHUA

Joshua, D.O.B. 6/13/2002, is a handsome young man with warm brown eyes and a friendly smile. He came into state custody when he was seven years old due to neglect and exposure to domestic violence.

Joshua is currently in the 4th grade. He receives special education services including specially designed instruction, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, adaptive physical education and extended school year services.

Joshua enjoys playing outside; he enjoys playing ball in the yard, riding his bike and going to the beach. He has a good sense of humor and loves to please. He enjoys playing with his classmates though he often needs guidance to improve his social skills. He also very much enjoys the attention of adults and is happy to accompany his foster parents in doing almost anything that they plan to do.

Joshua can be oppositional and struggles with anxiety. He has an expressive-receptive language disorder and scores in the mild range of mental retardation. Routine is very important to him as he has a difficult time when his routine is interrupted. Joshua functions best when his environment is calm, as he can get over stimulated when there is a lot of activity or a lot of people around him.

Joshua has a close relationship with his grandmother. His team is looking for a family that would support him in maintaining a relationship with her.

If you are interested in knowing more about Joshua, please contact his caseworker Nancy Bolduc at [nancy.bolduc@maine.gov](mailto:nancy.bolduc@maine.gov); #(207) 822-2289 or at DHHS 161 Marginal Way, Portland, ME 04101. Adoption subsidy may be available.



#### *Be the Difference- Volunteer*

We are looking for people who want to be a Court Appointed Special Advocate called a "CASA" Volunteer. Anyone that is at least 21 years of age is welcome to apply. A CASA is a trained citizen appointed by a judge to speak for a child who has been abused or neglected. As a CASA Volunteer, you are the child's voice in the legal and social service system.

If you want to make a difference in a child's life, be a CASA Volunteer. Since the inception of CASA, volunteers nationwide have helped more than two million children find safe, permanent homes in which they can thrive. In Maine we currently have over 100 volunteers who come from all walks of life to speak for Maine children in courts across the state. You don't need to have any special educational background. We will provide you with the training you will need.

In an overburdened social welfare system, abused and neglected children can slip through the cracks if they don't have someone to give them a voice. CASA volunteers change that.

#### **You can make a difference. Lift up a child.**

For more information:

Maine CASA

171 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333

Phone: 207-287-5403

e-mail: [CASA@courts.maine.gov](mailto:CASA@courts.maine.gov)

To learn more about the program and download our application, please visit our website at:

[http://www.courts.state.me.us/maine\\_courts/family/casa/index.shtml](http://www.courts.state.me.us/maine_courts/family/casa/index.shtml)

To learn more about National CASA, please visit:

<http://www.nationalcasa.org>

## Adoption Announcement!

Helena Hollauer and Gene Villacci are thrilled to announce the adoption of Mason Isaac Hollauer-Villacci, age 7! The family is so proud of Mason and look forward to sharing their lives together.

Jennifer and Thomas Wellwood are excited to announce the adoption of their 3 year old son Averick Allen Wellwood on July 2, 2012. Averick is welcomed by 19 and 20 year old brothers Matt and Chris and extended family and friends.

Tracey and Jason Holler are pleased to announce the adoption of Hailey and Philip on May 30th. Congratulations!

# Kinship Corner

*It's hard to believe but it's that time of year again, Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine and the Kinship Connects Program is gearing up for the Holiday Gift Giving Program! Kinship families are invited to add their children's names, gender, clothing size and age to a wish list for holiday gifts.*

*Once again, the amazing people from the Ogunquit Spirit of Giving Project will work to provide holiday presents to kids in AFFM programs. Give the office a call at 1-800-833-9786 and have your child's information and gift wish ready. We ask that you keep requests to under \$50.00 per child. The sooner we get the information the more likely we are to fulfill the children's wishes. We look forward to hearing from you!*

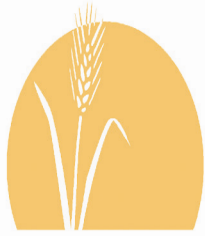
Celebrate Grandparent's Day September 9, 2012 at Gray Maine Wildlife Park!

Admissions is free for grandparents accompanied by their grandchildren! AFFM has Wildlife Park passes still available! Give the office a call and we'd be happy to send a pass your way 1-800-833-9786





## Announcements/FYI



New Beginnings

### Host Home Program Information Meeting

Learn more about providing safe and temporary shelter for a teenager in your community.

Every 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the Month 7-8 p.m.

550 Forest Avenue, Suite 101, Portland

Parking at back of building. Please use Forest Ave. entrance

Contact Jada Caron at 212-2534 For More Information

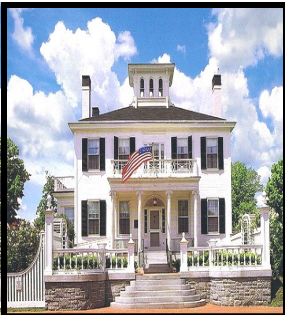
On September 30, 2011 President Barack Obama signed the P.L. 112-34 requiring that each child age 16 and older in foster care receive credit checks annually until no longer in foster care. This new federal rule is to prevent parents/family members from using the child's social security number for credit.

### Save the Dates!

Registration is now open for the New England Foster Care Association Conference October 12-14th in South Portland, Maine at DoubleTree Hilton Hotel. Brochure and registration along with more conference details can be found at [www.affm.net](http://www.affm.net)  
Check it out and Register today!



Mark your calendars for November 8<sup>th</sup> 10-1pm for AFFM's annual Hall of Flags recognition event to celebrate Adoption Awareness Month in November. This event is held at the Hall of Flags at the State Capitol in Augusta to raise awareness about the need for adoptive families for Maine's youth in care. This event is open to the public. Come enjoy light snacks, music, speakers, and learn more about adoption in the state of Maine. For more information about this event, or if you are an organization that would like a table please call 1-800-833-9786 or email: [meagan@affm.net](mailto:meagan@affm.net)



Are you a newly adoptive family? Did you finalize an adoption in the past 12 months? Are you about to adopt a child? If so AFFM would like you to consider attending a tea in honor of adoptive families at the Blaine House in Augusta November 1, 2012 from 2-3:30 pm. Space is limited so it will be first call first served and by confirmation only. AFFM hopes to see you and your family there for this wonderful celebration of National and State Adoption Awareness Month!

### Fireball Run to Benefit AFFM September 28, 2012

40 teams go head-to-head competing in 2012's FIREBALL RUN: Northern Exposure; an 8 day, 15 cities, 2500 mile interactive adventure game. To navigate the route and score, teams will use everything (and everyone) at their disposal solving clues and accomplishing missions based on northern history, geography, and pop culture

Check out [www.fireballrun.com](http://www.fireballrun.com) for more info!

## GRANDFAMILY GROUP MEETINGS

*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. Please contact us if you would like to receive a phone call reminder for your local group meeting!*

### AUGUST

**Augusta** - Wednesday, August 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, The Children's Center, 1 Alden Drive. **Please call Meaghan at 1-866-298-0896 to reserve childcare.**

**Bangor** - Tuesday, August 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, Families And Children Together office, 304 Hancock Street. **Please call Meaghan at 1-866-298-0896 to reserve childcare.**

**Bangor** - Tuesday, August 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 pm, Families And Children Together office, 304 Hancock Street. **Please call Meaghan at 1-866-298-0896 to reserve childcare.**

**Belfast** - There will be no Belfast Group in August.

**Dover-Foxcroft** - Monday, August 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm, Penquis, 50 North Street. **Please call Meaghan at 1-866-298-0896 to reserve childcare.**

**Ellsworth** - Tuesday, August 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30 pm, Byrant E. Moore School, 125 State Street. **Please call Linda at Downeast Health Services to register and reserve childcare at 667-5304.**

**Westbrook** - Wednesday, August 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, Maine Kids-Kin, 869 Main Street, Suite 900. **To register and reserve childcare, contact Mindy at 591-6278 or mwilliams@mainekids-kin.org.**

**Westbrook** - Tuesday, August 28<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am, Maine Kids-Kin, 869 Main Street, Suite 900. **To register, contact Cathy at 591-6278 or cpaglio@mainekids-kin.org.**

**Westbrook** - Wednesday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 pm, Maine Kids-Kin, 869 Main Street, Suite 900. **To register and reserve childcare, contact Mindy at 591-6278 or mwilliams@mainekids-kin.org.**

### SEPTEMBER

**Augusta** - Wednesday, September 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, The Children's Center, 1 Alden Drive. **Please call Meaghan at 1-866-298-0896 to reserve childcare.**

**Bangor** - Tuesday, September 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, Families And Children Together office, 304 Hancock Street. **Please call Meaghan at 1-866-298-0896 to reserve childcare.**

**Bangor** - Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, Families And Children Together office, 304 Hancock Street. **Please call Meaghan at 1-866-298-0896 to reserve childcare.**

**Belfast** - Thursday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am, Belfast Free Library, High Street.

**Dover-Foxcroft** - Monday, September 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm, Penquis, 50 North Street. **Please call Meaghan at 1-866-298-0896 to reserve childcare.**

**Ellsworth** - Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm, Byrant E. Moore School, 125 State Street. **Please call Linda at Downeast Health Services to register and reserve childcare at 667-5304.**

**Westbrook** - Wednesday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, Maine Kids-Kin, 869 Main Street, Suite 900. **To register and reserve childcare, contact Mindy at 591-6278 or mwilliams@mainekids-kin.org.**

**Westbrook** - Tuesday, September 25<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am, Maine Kids-Kin, 869 Main Street, Suite 900. **To register, contact Cathy at 591-6278 or cpaglio@mainekids-kin.org.**

**Westbrook** - Wednesday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, Maine Kids-Kin, 869 Main Street, Suite 900. **To register and reserve childcare, contact Mindy at 591-6278 or mwilliams@mainekids-kin.org.**

**COME JOIN ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER FAMILIES OF MAINE AND THE  
KINSHIP PROGRAM FOR A SUPPORT GROUP FOR ADOPTIVE,  
FOSTER AND KINSHIP FAMILIES!**

*There will be a special emphasize on  
understanding pre-natal substance exposure such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum  
Disorder and Fetal Drug Exposure*

**LOCATION: BOOKS-A-MILLION, BAM  
116 BANGOR MALL BLVD.  
BANGOR, MAINE 04401**

**SEPTEMBER 17, 2012 AT 6PM**

**PLEASE RSVP TO:  
1-800-833-9786 or email [info@affm.net](mailto:info@affm.net)**

## URGENT NEED

### Multidimensional Treatment Agencies Announce Openings

*Interested in providing a teen with an opportunity to learn, grow and get back on track?*

- Coach • Advocate • Mentor • Cheerleader • Guide



#### What is Multidimensional Treatment (MT)?

- MT provides an opportunity for a youth to live successfully with a family while helping to prepare the youth's natural family to sustain positive changes that have occurred.
- Placements are short term, typically 6-9 months. Each home has only one MT placement at a time.
- MT is community-based treatment in a home setting for youths 12-17 with emotional and behavioral challenges.

#### What Type of Support Will My Family Receive?

- You will receive a high level of support from MT staff. The program supervisor is on-call 24 hours a day for any assistance.
- You receive daily phone contact and attend weekly support meetings.
- You are provided with extensive and ongoing training to ensure you use specific behavior management skills to help these teens.
- You receive financial compensation of \$525.00 per week, which is tax-free.

**Multidimensional Treatment has over 30 years of research by the Oregon Social Learning Center**

60 Miles from East Winthrop  
Contact: Melodie Rand  
[mrاند@chcs-me.org](mailto:mrاند@chcs-me.org)  
207-213-2164



**Community Health and  
Counseling Services**

**the  
Opportunity  
Alliance**

35 minute drive from South Portland  
Contact: Sarah MacLaughlin  
[sarah.maclaughlin@opportunityalliance.org](mailto:sarah.maclaughlin@opportunityalliance.org)  
207-523-5038

**Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.**  
**294 Center Street, Unit 1 — Old Town, ME 04468**

**Phone: 1-800-833-9786 or (207) 827-2331**  
**Fax: (207) 827-1974**  
**On the Web: [www.affm.net](http://www.affm.net)**  
**E-Mail: [info@affm.net](mailto:info@affm.net)**

**Affiliated With:**  
**The North American Council on Adoptable Children**  
**National Foster Parent Association**

**FAMILY TIES THE NEWSLETTER OF ADOPTIVE & FOSTER FAMILIES OF MAINE, INC**  
**PUBLISHED WITH SUPPORT FROM THE MAINE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND**  
**HUMAN SERVICES. PLEASE DIRECT COMMENTS TO: EDITOR, FAMIY TIES,**  
**AT THE ADDRESS ABOVE.**

**NON-PROFIT**  
**U.S. POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
**OLD TOWN, ME**  
**PERMIT NO. 65**