

Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

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Newsletter

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College Step Up: Helping to Ease the Transition From Care to College



The 18-year-olds who “age out” of the foster care system each year wind up making critical life decisions — finding housing, getting a job, buying food and clothing — much earlier than their peers who grow up with at least one parent. There is one option, though, that former foster youths don’t often pursue: higher education. Fewer than half graduate from high school; of those who do, only 2 percent get college degrees.

A program called [College Step Up](#) hopes to change that. A collaboration between the Good Will-Hinckley organization and Kennebec Valley Community College, College Step Up provides the emotional, financial and logistical backing that former foster kids — like all young people — need as they embark on higher education. Since Maine is looking to encourage young people to get the credentials they need to compete in the workforce, it should do all it can to support College Step Up. It’s a program with the potential to pay off both for our state and for young people who have a lot to give.

A lot of factors play into success in higher education. Students need the money for tuition and books and a safe, stable place to live. They need help filling out admission and financial aid forms, and adults who will offer guidance and sympathy. Former foster kids don’t have a family to count on for any of these things. That’s where College Step Up steps in. Started with a Finance Authority of Maine grant, it provides year-round housing on the campus of the former Good Will-Hinckley Home for at-risk youth; transportation to Kennebec Valley Community College, where students take classes, and help securing financial aid so students graduate with little to no debt.

Students also are coached on study and life skills (such as personal finance) — not to mention building relationships with adults who care about whether they succeed. Two young people are enrolled now; KVCC and the Good Will-Hinckley organization hope to expand it to serve 10 to 15. Good-Will Hinckley also runs a charter school that is separate from College Step Up.

If all that sounds expensive, consider the cost of doing nothing to support these young adults: per person, \$300,000 on average during their lifetimes in public assistance, incarceration and lost wages. This adds up to \$7.8 billion spent by communities and taxpayers, according to a recent study. (<http://jimcaseyyouth.org/sites/default/files/JCY-beyond-18-infographic.pdf>)

The state has a role to play in furthering the aims of College Step Up. The Department of Health and Human Services is doing more to make foster kids aware of the option to stay in care after 18 and get the financial support available to students. And lawmakers will consider a DHHS budget that may allow for reasonable monthly allotments for College Step Up students in extended care.

Young people in foster care have faced a lot of instability and trauma in their lives. But their experiences also have bred resilience, a useful quality for anyone who wants to learn and grow. State support, along with Good Will-Hinckley’s private fundraising, is crucial to foster kids in College Step Up as they seek to beat the odds, develop their skills and contribute to the community.

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Kinship Corner

Think Summer! AFFM's Summer Campership Program will be kicking off before you know it! If you are a kinship provider (raising a relative's child in your home) and are interested in having your child/children attend summer camp, give the office a call at 1-800-833-9786. Please be prepared to provide information about your child's interest, special needs and/or medical needs so we can find a camp that is best suited for him/her.



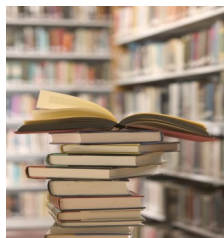
New Materials Added to AFFM's Lending Library

Ticklebelly Hill : by Hilda Osborne. Hilda is a grandmother that finds herself and her husband raising their grandchildren. Many grandparents are finding themselves in the same situation. The book is a light-hearted but serious look at the changes, challenges, joys, mixed emotions and guilt associated with raising your grandchildren.

Courageous Love : by Laura Montane Bailey. Courageous Love is a guide designed to help grandparents face the challenges of raising their grandchildren. Frequently, these children come from an environment of abuse, loss and neglect. All of these factors can affect emotional, behavioral and developmental growth. Bailey introduces a model, *Healing Circles*, to help provide traumatized children with key components to aid in their psychological and emotional growth. The author also focuses on: safety, basic needs, structure, clear rules, authority agreements, family gatherings to foster a sense of belonging and to create an identity. Bailey provides some tools and discusses the responsibilities of raising grandchildren in our high tech world.

Grandparents Adopting Their Grandchildren And How It Can Affect Their Relationship With Their Children : by Sadie Olivia Meadows. This is a story of one woman's struggle to have her daughter become clean and sober so she can be a mother to her son. Meadows' addresses heartbreaking issues of whether to refuse to help or to step in to protect and raise their grandchildren. Meadows also gives suggestions for grandparents when their grown child is not fit to be a parent.

Interested in checking these books out? Give AFFM a call at 1-800-833-9786 or email info@affm.net with your request. A list of lending library materials provided by AFFM can also be found at www.affm.net

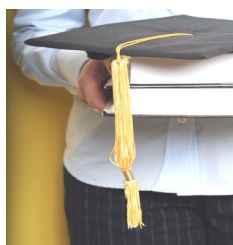


Scholarship Opportunity

2014 NFPA Youth Scholarship

The National Foster Parent Association offers scholarships for foster youth, adopted youth, or biological youth of currently licensed foster parents, who wish to further their education beyond high school, including college or university studies, vocational/technical school or junior college. Five scholarships in the amount of \$500 will be awarded during 2014. The foster parents must be members of NFPA.

Application and all attachments due on or before March 14, 2014. Information can be found at <http://nfpaonline.org/nfpascholarship>



For more scholarship opportunities check out: <http://nfpaonline.org/youthscholarship>



Kinship International Network
Advancing family identity for children through kinship care worldwide

An Australian Senate inquiry Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

**In December 2013, the Australian Government referred
the matter of grandparents raising grandchildren to the Senate**

The Australian Government's Announcement

West Australian Liberal Senator Dean Smith said the number of grandparents who have postponed retirement to look after children was on the rise, yet the government knew little about the challenges they faced.

"Some of the stories these grandparents have shared are inspiring and heartrending in equal measure.. At a time when many of their friends are making retirement plans, these heroic grandparents are dealing with the many physical, emotional and financial challenges that come with raising young children." said Senator Smith

The inquiry which due to report by September 30, 2014, will investigate:

- The Practical challenges facing grandparents raising their grandchildren, and their support needs.
- The role and contribution of grandparents raising their grandchildren, and how this should be recognised;
- Other challenges that grandparents raising their grandchildren face in undertaking their role, including in circumstances complicated by family conflict, mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, child abuse or neglect, or family violence.
- The barriers that grandparents raising their grandchildren face in acquiring legal recognition of their family arrangement, including Legal Aid entitlements for grandparents seeking to formalize their custodial arrangements through the Family Law Courts
- The practical measures that can be implemented by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the community sector to support grandparents raising their grandchildren, including key priorities for action;
- The specific needs of particular groups within the caring population, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders grandparent carers, grandparents caring for grandchildren with disability, grandparents from culturally and linguistically diverse background, grandparents with mental health needs and grandparents with an informal care arrangement for their grandchildren.

The Grandparents Australia response

Grandparents around Australia have welcomed the news of the senate inquiry. This level of recognition of the role these grandparents play is most welcome by all grandparents. Even grandparents who are not raising their grandchildren are concerned that those who are undertaking this role are not well enough supported.

Not only are grandparents who raise their grandchildren contributing to the well being of their own families, they are also contributing to the overall wellbeing of the nation. Children are our most precious resource and the more of them who are happy and well the better off the nation will be.

Studies around the world are showing that the care given by grandparents is of the highest quality - with even the most troubled children benefitting from the unconditional love that only grandparents seem able to give. However, the financial, emotion and physical cost for grandparents is high and it is through enquiries such as this we will get a clear picture of the pressure points and how to relieve them.

"This inquiry will be relevant far beyond Australia's shores. I believe that a national inquiry on this matter is a first, certainly amongst the nations with whom grandparents Australia has close contact", said Mrs. McLeish.

For information contact
Anne Mcleish Director, Grandparents Australia
Email: director@grandparents.com.au

See how this compares with initiatives going on in Maine. Check out the Jim Casey youth opportunity initiatives, <http://jimcaseyyouth.org/>

Save the Dates!

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Community Conversations for the year 2014!

Community Conversations brings together a panel of youth, foster, adoptive and kinship parents. Stories will be shared about what has worked and what has not in achieving permanency for youth in foster care. As participants you will be given the opportunity to ask questions and share ideas on what permanency means to you. We all want youth to have someone to call on to share and help celebrate their joys as well as to help decrease their challenges and sorrows. Your input matters.

The Community Conversations we hope will lead to an on-going dialogue about this important topic. We hope the dialogue will improve and increase the numbers of youth who achieve permanency. Resource families are encouraged to attend. Your voices are so important. You are with the youth every day and night. You understand the messages they share and many that they don't. Please join in and help Maine move more kids into permanency. **All conversations are 9:00am-2:00pm.**

- March 4, 2014 - Augusta (Snow Date March 13, 2014) **Location: Augusta Armory (179 Western Ave)**
 - March 17, 2014 - Machias (Snow Date March 27, 2014) **Location: Machias DHHS**
 - April 4, 2014 - Rockland
 - April 30, 2014 - Lewiston
 - May 7, 2014 - Bangor
 - May 20, 2014 - Ellsworth
 - June 10, 2014 - Portland
 - June 17, 2014 - Biddeford

**Locations to be determined for future Community Conversations, if you know of a location that may work please contact Margaret at margaret@affm.net. Thank you!*

2014 Conference Nominations

As in previous years AFFM wishes to acknowledge those who go above and beyond their jobs for the families we serve. AFFM is now accepting nominations for individuals who have been exceptional advocates in the following categories:

*** Adoption Caseworker * Regional Program Administrator * Guardian Ad-Litem**

*** Children's Services Caseworker * Child Protective Caseworker * Private Agency Director**

*** Kinship worker * Legislative / Senate Members * Community Organizations**

***Outstanding Resource Parents**

AFFM asks you to take a moment and think of someone that has gone above and beyond for Maine's youth in care and send a nomination in for one of the above categories to:

Barbara Ford, AFFM President

fstrdad@aol.com

Please have all nominations in by March 1, 2014



State-Wide Resource Family Support Groups

Bangor: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets from 6:00-8:00 PM on the 3rd Monday of every month at 26 Downeast Circle (between Davis Road and Mt. Dessert Drive), Bangor. Onsite Child care available with advanced notice. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affm.net to RSVP. Please call before you come.

Belfast: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets the 4th Friday of the month at the Calvary Chapel Church in Belfast 147 Waldo Ave. in the Wentworth Building. Contact BraveFamilies@gmail.com to RSVP. Sorry child care is not available at this time.

Caribou: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship parent support. Meets every 1st Thursday of the month at 5:30PM at Caribou Adult Education Building on Bennett Drive in between Caribou Rec and the gas station. Child care is not provided at this time. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affm.net to RSVP.

Dover-Foxcroft: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 2nd Tuesday of the month from 6PM-7:30PM at Mayo Regional Hospital, Borestone and Sebec conference room. Onsite Child care available with advanced notice. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affm.net to RSVP. Please call before you come.

Ellsworth: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month from 5:30pm-7:30pm at Ellsworth Elementary/Middle School 20 Forest Ave. in Ellsworth. Onsite Child care available with advanced notice. Please contact Mindy Kane, Community Health and Counseling Services (CHCS), at 263-2014 or email MKane@chcs-me.org to reserve a spot for childcare. Thanks to a local grant awarded to CHCS, AFFM is able to provide mileage reimbursement for families traveling more than 30 miles from home.

Houlton: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship support. Meets every every 2nd Thursday of the month from 5:30pm-7:30pm at Houlton CHCS 2 Water Street. Onsite Child care available with advanced notice. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affm.net to RSVP. Please call before you come.

Lewiston: The Tri-County Adoptive Foster & Kinship Assoc. meets on the 4th Tuesday of the month 6pm-8pm at the B Street Community Center 57 Birch Street Lewiston. The group offers training, as well as local support & resources. On-site childcare is provided with advanced notice. Call Denise Gove at 782-1138 or email her at drzove@aol.com or contact David Nielson at 409-3609 to RSVP.

Machias: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 1st Friday of the month 5:30PM-7:30PM at Rose M. Gaffney Elementary School 15 Rose Gaffney Road, Machias. Onsite Child care available with advanced notice. Please contact Mindy Kane, Community Health and Counseling Services, at 263-2014 or email MKane@chcs-me.org to RSVP. Thanks to a local grant awarded to CHCS, AFFM is able to provide mileage reimbursement for families traveling more than 30 miles from home.

Rockland: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 4th Tuesday of the month 5:30PM-7:30PM at Knox Center (Pen Bay Healthcare) 6 White Street, Rockland. Onsite Child care available with advanced notice. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affm.net to RSVP. Please call before you come.

Sherman: Adoptive/Kinship support. Meets the 1st Monday of the month at 7 Cow Team Road in Sherman. Please contact Debbie Irish at 365-7133 for more information. This group does not meet during the summer.

Skowhegan: The group meets 5:30-8:00PM every second Wednesday of the month located at Skowhegan Federated Church 13 Island Avenue in Skowhegan. Onsite Child care available with advanced notice. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affm.net to RSVP. Please call before you come.

South Paris: Kinship Support. Meets 9:00AM-10:00AM every second Saturday of the month, unless noted. Meets at Deering Memorial Church 39 Main Street, South Paris. Please RSVP to Shelley Newcomb at comb2599@roadrunner.com

South Portland: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship support. Meets 5:30PM-7:30PM at 62 Darling Ave, South Portland. This group will meet every 2nd Tuesday of the month. Please contact Meagan Stearns at meagan@affin.net or call 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affin.net to RSVP. Please call before you come.

Westbrook: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets 10:00AM-12PM at Westbrook-Warren Congregational Church (810 Main St Westbrook) The group will meet every 1st Wednesday of the month. Onsite Child care available with advanced notice. Please contact Meagan Stearns at meagan@affin.net or call 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affin.net to RSVP. Please call before you come.

York: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets 5:30PM-6:30PM at York Hospital. Please use the Hancock Entrance, group will be held in Ellis Conference Room (on your immediate left). This group will meet every 2nd Thursday of the month. Please RSVP to Meagan Stearns at meagan@affin.net or call 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affin.net. Please call before you come.

Adoption Announcements!

Molly and Chris Baker are overjoyed to share the adoption of their son Kolton Dominic Baker on December 31, 2013. Congratulations!



Michael and Olivia Paige and their children Hannah and Sean adopted Derek on November 6, 2013. We are so blessed to have this bundle of energy in our home.



Wendy's Wonderful Kids

WOODFORDS FAMILY SERVICES RECEIVES GRANT FROM THE DAVE THOMAS FOUNDATION FOR ADOPTION

Woodfords Family Services has received a grant from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, a national nonprofit whose mission is to find forever families for children in foster care. This grant funds a child-focused adoption recruiter for Wendy's Wonderful Kids, a signature program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Woodfords Family Services has hired adoption recruiter Mindy Williams who is working to match the longest-waiting children in foster care with loving adoptive families. Dedicated to the needs of Maine's waiting children, Williams is excited to be a part of this special program, the only one of its kind in Maine.

To learn more about The Wendy's Wonderful Kids program or how to adopt from foster care, contact WWK recruiter Mindy Williams at mwilliams@woodfords.org, (207) 878-9663 x4154, or woodfords.org, or davethomasfoundation.org.

Tamarack Vacation

The Wilhelm Reich Museum is owned and operated by The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust. This Trust was established by world renowned scientist, Wilhelm Reich, in his Last Will and Testament. The Trust maintains the property at Orgonon under the name and style of the Wilhelm Reich Museum. On this land is his cabin, Tamarack. Mr. Reich's Will also stated that Tamarack be used as a "summer home for children." The Trust has chosen a way to fulfill this final wish by making Tamarack available for adoptive, foster, and kinship families for five weeks in the summer! This opportunity is available to those that might not have another means of this type of vacation. Mary Higgins, trustee, works with AFFM on this opportunity annually.

The cabin is located on the grounds of Orgonon, formerly the home, laboratory, and research center of Wilhelm Reich. Orgonon is located just off of the Dodge Pond Road in Rangeley. Tamarack is about 75 yards away from Dodge Pond. Because the pond is a natural nesting place for loons, power boats, jet skis, and recreational vehicles (i.e. four wheelers) are all strictly prohibited. Rowboats and canoes are permitted. At the foot of the path leading to the pond is a floating platform, a great spot for shore fishing, sunbathing, and jumping in the water. The water is deep and the area is quite rocky. Children will require careful supervision and non-swimmers will require life jackets.

Tamarack is a large, charming, 3 bedroom, 1 bath cabin with a comfortable interior. Tamarack has a complete kitchen with a full size refrigerator and gas stove, and a beautiful living room with a stone fireplace. The camp does not have a phone or television. Families need to provide their own food and bedding. The Tamarack vacation opportunity is designed for the families who otherwise might not be able to afford a vacation, so there are certain eligibility requirements that apply.

To be eligible, you must not own or have access to a summer camp, time-share, or RV. Also, if you have been a Tamarack winner in 2011 and 2012, we ask that you not apply. The drawing will be held April 7th and winners will be notified by phone or email by April 21st.



Many families dearly want to utilize Tamarack. It is necessary that any winners who cannot attend please notify AFFM at least one week in advance. It is important to have time to find an alternate family and give them time to prepare for their vacation, so this beautiful cabin can be enjoyed throughout the heart of the summer.

"2014 Weeklong Summer Vacation at Tamarack ENTRY FORM"

Name(s): _____ Phone: _____ E-Mail _____

Address: _____ # of Children: _____

Please circle the weeks below that your family would be able to attend. Put a star() by the week(s) that are your family's top choice(s).*

June 1-7

June 8-14

June 15-22

June 23-29

June 30-July 6

July 7-July 12

Mail entries to: **Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine, 294 Center St. Suite 1, Old Town, ME 04468**

Entries must be received by March 30, 2014. Winners will be notified by April 6, 2014

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
E-Mail: info@affm.net

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

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Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine & the Kinship Program

Presents the 17th Annual Spring Conference

The Power of Family;

It's More Than Surviving, it's Thriving



April 25 and 26, 2014

Hilton Garden Inn

Bangor, Maine

More Information can be found at www.affm.net