

Family Ties



Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

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Newsletter

May 2014

Celebrate Foster Care Awareness Month this May!

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine and the Kinship Program had the pleasure of interviewing a very special foster parent in honor of Foster Care Awareness Month. It was a privilege to meet and interview Jamie Mawhinney. Below are the questions and answers shared. I hope readers will enjoy this family's amazing story. I believe it is exemplary of many that open their hearts and homes to Maine's children.

How long have you been providing foster care?

We received our license in the fall of 2007 and by the end of the same week we received our first call to foster a newborn.

What made you decide to do foster care?

I remember sitting on the couch one day with my husband, watching tv and seeing one of the commercials for A Family for ME. We both said what a great gift to give a child and agreed that one day we would look into becoming licensed with an intent to adopt if and when that might be possible. Within a year or so we found friends who happened to be licensed foster parents and once again found ourselves thinking what a great gift, we should really look into this. So we got together with our friends and "interviewed" them about their experience. Though still interested we didn't act on it. Within a couple of years I found myself playing softball with some ladies who happened to work for DHHS. By this point in time we had two children of our own and still had a desire to look into foster care. I questioned the ladies throughout the softball season and ultimately attended an informational meeting, completed the initial paperwork and that's where it all began.

Importance of foster care

There are so many children out there in need of care that it is a bit overwhelming. Unfortunately this is not something that is publicized enough and folks are unaware of the difference that they can truly make in a child or children's life. Even more, the parent's life. There are so many ugly statistics out there for these kids and their parents yet, there are so many great stories too, life changing stories that are not told enough. Every child deserves a childhood and stability and all the good things that life can provide. Foster care may be permanent or it may be temporary, you just never know when you're going to be the one that made a difference.

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Have you ever reunified a child that was in your home?

Can you describe the experience Yes. Our first foster child came to us as an 8 week old baby, less than 1 week after becoming licensed. Though we were newly licensed we went into this with the intent of adopting, if and when that may become a possibility. We also understood that reunification was always the intent of the Department, if and whenever possible. In our case, Mom was a teenager and had some history of domestic violence with the baby's father. Through Family Team Meetings we got to know more about the situation. Mom was very nervous about caring for her baby and we offered her the opportunity to come to our home and visit with him to see how we cared for him, to learn that there are different kinds of cries, to learn how to feed him and be more comfortable caring for him. The Department agreed to this and we allowed her to visit him daily.

Ultimately she even stayed overnight with us on occasion as she would call us when she was scared of the baby's father trying to come around. Mom's extended family was unable to provide any stability for her or the baby during this time and whenever it seemed that Mom was looking to us for guidance they would intervene. Their intervention ranged from contacting the police for various reasons, telling Mom that we were trying to steal her baby from her, and sometimes included them wanting a say in how often he was being fed or what he was suppose to wear to visits with Mom. This caused some major setbacks for Mom in terms of feeling torn between trusting what she was being told by her family and the guidance we were trying to provide for she and her baby. Two weeks before the baby's first birthday we were told by the court that the baby was going to return to Mom's care and that we needed to make arrangements for this transition to occur. As a family with two young children of our own, we had explained to our kids that foster care was like babysitting – some children had parents who needed a little time to take care of grown-up stuff and we were helping out -though it may be weeks, months or years before or if the children might return home. Despite having this mentality, giving this child to his mother, knowing he would not be coming back was extremely emotional for our family. Though we had always been a resource for Mom through this process, we needed to step back and let her do this on her own. Within a couple of weeks, the phone rang in the middle of the night. It was Mom, the baby had a fever and she didn't know what she should do and wanted our help. I talked her through this and we checked in with each other for the next few days. We ended up going to visit them and then invited them over to celebrate his first birthday. Today he is a happy, healthy 6 year old. Mom is married, and has a wonderful family. She obtained her GED, works as a CNA and is in the midst of going to nursing school. We continue to have contact and get together often, spending most holidays together, they are truly part of our extended family!

Importance of reunification

From the "outside" looking in, reunification doesn't necessarily make sense to most folks. In our experience, though difficult to understand at the time, the reunification process can really work. We were able to provide a little boy with what he needed for a period of time and then he was able to return home and continue to thrive in an environment that included his birth mother, whom we're happy to call our friend.

AFFM would like to thank Jamie, for taking the time to share her story. And to take the time to thank all resource parents for the incredible work they do for Maine's youth in care. You are all appreciated!

The Southern Maine Foster Family Recruitment Team Presents:

Brain Gym® for Focus, Calming, Self-control and Joy

Licensed Brain Gym® Practitioner, Beth Stoddard, will show how parents can help their children travel the road to growth and achievement. Using research on how a child's brain and body system interrelate, Beth will demonstrate simple movements and activities that can transform a challenge to an opportunity for success. Children naturally want to enjoy a sense of accomplishment, and we'll learn some aids to make that happen. There will be handouts and practice to make a "WIN" for the child, a "WIN" for the parents and a "WIN" for the relationship.

Beth Stoddard, MBA, Brain Gym® Practitioner, licensed in 1999 in Victoria, BC has taught throughout Maine for 15 years. Beth lives in Portland and has been a frequent presenter to Foster Parents through the Muskie School and DHHS.

This is a FREE Training with dinner provided!

Childcare available with advanced notice.

If childcare is needed please provide ages of children.

2 Credit Hours Available

Location: 50 Lydia Lane South Portland, Maine (Opportunity Alliance)

Date: Wednesday, May 14, 2014

Dinner: 5:30pm

Training: 6:00pm-8:00pm

RSVP: Meagan Stearns at 1-800-833-9786 or email: meagan@affm.net

The Things We Don't Say

I'm just a Foster Mom
I spend my time
Walking around
Thinking of the things we don't say
We get up each morning
And start the day
Getting ready for school
Thinking of the things we don't say
I am by your side
And in your corner
Fighting for you
Thinking of the things we don't say
I am the buffer from the world
The keeper of the peace
The one that is standing in another's place
Thinking of the things we don't say
Mother's Day is coming
It's another year
You're not going home to Mom
But I am still here
Thinking of the things we don't say

-April Turner

Sign Up for Fort Knox Today!

"Foster Family Day at the Fort"!

This is a wonderful opportunity for AFFM to honor all who provide care to Maine's children in out of home placements during Foster Care Month. This includes Resource parents (Foster, adoptive and kin) as well as DHHS staff and private agencies that provide for the safety and well-being of Maine's children.

May 17, 2014 11:00am-2:30pm

Fort Knox

Prospect, Maine

Come and enjoy a cookout, games, prizes, giveaways, entertainment, and much more! This a FREE event for all!

Call AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to sign up or email

info@affm.net.

We look forward to seeing you again this year!

State-Wide Resource Family Support Groups



State-Wide Resource Family Support Groups

At times meetings are cancelled due to weather and other unforeseen circumstances, cancellation notices are sent out via the AFFM email list serve. Families are urged to call or email info@affm.net to be added to this service.

The email list serve also provides information about available donated goods, social family activities, training events, DHHS and legislative updates, and more.

Augusta – Kinship only: 3rd Wednesday of the month from 6:00 - 8:00 pm, The Buker Community Center, 22 Armory Drive, Augusta. Free on-site childcare available. For more information, please call Maine Kids-Kin at 207-941-2347 or 1-866-298-0896.

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.

Bangor –Kinship only: 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month from 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Families And Children Together, 304 Hancock Street, Suite 2B. Free on-site childcare available. For more information, please call Maine Kids-Kin at 207-941-2347 or 1-866-298-0896.

Belfast: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. A faith based support group that meets on the 3rd Friday of the month at the Calvary Chapel Church in Belfast 147 Waldo Ave. in the rear entrance of the Wentworth Building. Contact: BraveFamilies@gmail.com to RSVP and visit www.facebook.com/bravefamilies for more information. 10:00 AM prayer & Devotion (optional), 10:30 AM coffee/social, 10:45-12 PM support group. Sorry child care is not available at this time.

Bridgton- Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30PM-8:00PM at the Community Center (Behind Reny's), 15 Depot Street Bridgton. Childcare is not provided at this time. Please RSVP to Vanessa at 647-2317 or AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 before you come.

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 drgove@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.

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@affm.net or call 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affm.net to RSVP. Please call before you come.

Waterboro: Massabesic area foster and adoptive support group. Meets every 4th Thursday of the month at 6:30pm. Meets at Waterboro Town Hall 24 Townhouse Road, East Waterboro. Please contact Brigid at Brigid.MAAFFSG@gmail.com.

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@affm.net or call 1-800-833-9786 or email: info@affm.net. Please call before you come.

Support Group Inquiry

Resource Family Support Groups have been requested for the Bath, Topsham and Augusta area

We need to hear from you! Would you attend a monthly support group meeting in one of these areas?

Please call AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 or email Jim at jim@affm.net if you are interested in attending meetings at either of these locations. AFFM needs to hear from **at least 6** adoptive, foster, or kinship caregivers-before we can start the group in any proposed location.

AFFM support groups are intended to be a discussion and informational sharing platform.

Participants' questions and concerns are addressed by the participants and AFFM staff. At the participant's request, AFFM will bring in a special speaker to discuss an issue more in detail or offer a training event in the area to address the topic of concern. AFFM offers childcare at all AFFM facilitated support group meeting locations with advanced notice.



New Contact Info: Ellen Kornetsky, LCSW Counseling

I'm pleased to announce that my full-time counseling practice is now located at:

29 Burbank Avenue, Suite 114, in Brunswick

Look for me in the "Seeds of Independence" building (# 24)
at Brunswick Landing (former Naval Air Station).

Phone: 207-406-2468

Fax: 207-406-4640

Email: ellenkornetskylcsw@gmail.com



As you may already know, I'm a 20-year veteran in the field specializing in adoption, relationship and family issues, and a variety of mental health concerns. More specifically, I provide adoption options counseling and assistance with identity and birth family issues, search and reunion preparation, and post-adoption challenges. I offer therapy to address grief and loss, depression, anxiety, attachment issues, trauma, and life transitions. I address such family issues as interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, blended-family struggles, and what I call "compassionate divorce/disengagement." I work best with clients from middle-school age through adulthood, and I especially enjoy adolescents...*really!*

LD 1683: An Act to Improve Degree and Career Attainment for Former Foster Children

This bill raises the upper age limit, from 20 years of age to 26 years of age, for voluntary participation in extended care for persons who attained 18 years of age while in the care and custody of the State.

On April 17, 2014 LD 1683 was passed to be enacted!

Kinship Corner

Looking for a great resource? Check out Generations United!

Generations United is a national membership organization that focuses solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs that benefit all family members. One major initiative of Generations United, Seniors4Kids raises the voices of older adults in support of policies that benefit children. Currently, Seniors4Kids is working to create statewide networks of community leaders and grassroots volunteers called Captains4Kids who work to increase the availability of high-quality early care and education.

Check out www.seniors4kids.org for more information and to see what kinship providers in other states are doing to make a difference in youth's lives.



Adoption Announcement!

Congratulations to the Merchant family on the adoption of their son Cayden Alexander Merchant. The adoption was legalized on March 6, 2014. Tom Merchant and Kelly Jordan-Merchant are proud parents!



Have you recently legalized an adoption? Want to share the exciting news with others? AFFM would love to celebrate your news and create an adoption announcement in our Family Ties newsletter. Send a write up and photo (if you wish) to meagan@affm.net or call the office at 827-2331.

AFFM looks forward to hearing from you!

Community Conversation Schedules

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.

- May 20, 2014 - Ellsworth (Ellsworth City Hall, 1 City Hall Ave.)
- May 29, 2014 - Lewiston (Auburn Public Library, 49 Spring Street, Auburn)
 - June 6, 2014 - Bangor (Location: TBD)
 - June 10, 2014 - Portland (Location: TBD)
 - June 17, 2014 - Biddeford (Location: TBD)

**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!*

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

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OLD TOWN, ME

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**Happy Mother's Day to
all who mother another's child**

*Don't forget to like Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.
on Facebook!*



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