



# Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

Volume 18 Number 12

Newsletter

December 2015

## TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON



### *How can we work with birth families during the holidays?*

• Ask children about their experiences and try to incorporate some of their traditions. The children placed in your home may miss some activities that they experienced with their family or in a previous placement. • If possible, ask your child's family members about their holiday traditions and customs. Ask about their beliefs and observances. Although you may feel stretched at the holidays, try to coordinate schedules with the birth families. This gives the children a chance to share what is familiar while experiencing new traditions. • This is a good time for the youth in your home to make small gifts and send cards to their birth families or old neighbors and friends. • This is a time when many children feel conflicted feelings about their birth families and worry about them. It is a good time to let the young person know that it is okay for them to be safe and cared for even if their family struggles. Reassure them if you can, about the safety and care of their birth family.

### *What are some of the ways I can help the children who I foster get through the holidays? What are some signs of grief or sadness that I can look for?*

• Be prepared for the sadness and grief. Talk about your child's feelings throughout the season. • Give your children time and space to grieve. Grief takes many forms and may be exhibited in lots of ways, including: • Reverting back to younger behaviors developmentally • Soiling themselves or bedwetting • Becoming withdrawn and isolated • Having temper tantrums • Being rebellious • Complaining more than usual • Try to remember the developmental age of the children you foster. It will also help you to stay patient if you keep in mind the challenges of the season for your child before you react.

### *How can my family make it easier for the children in foster care while they are in our home?*

• Talk about the season ahead of time. Talk about how your family celebrates the holidays. Tell children which of the traditional holidays your house recognizes. Is it Thanksgiving? Kwanzaa? Hanukah? Christmas? New Year? Or all of the above? Talking about the holidays gives children time to anticipate the upcoming activities and ask questions. • Help children in foster care imagine what to expect in your home. Much of what we assume to be commonplace can be new to the children you foster. • Share the religious meanings the holidays may have for your family. Talk about your family's specific customs and activities. • Use this time of sharing to learn especially about the religious beliefs, customs, and activities of the children you foster. • Try to incorporate at least some of their traditions into your traditions. • Some parents try to keep the holidays low key in order to help minimize some of the stress.

*Tips found on: <http://centerforchildwelfare2.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/FosterParents/CelebratingHolidaysW-ChildInFC.pdf>*

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AFFM couldn't do what it does if not for the wonderful families who provide for adoption, foster care and kinship care in Maine. We at AFFM wish you A Happy Holiday Season and a safe and blessed New Year. We look forward to serving you in 2016. Thank you for parents, workers and all Family Ties readers for your part in the care of Maine's children and their families.



## AFFM's Role with the National Foster Parent Association

Did you know AFFM is a state affiliate member of the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA)? The NFPA is a non-profit organization that supports foster parents nationally in achieving safety, permanence and well-being for the children and youth in their care. Their primary activities include:

- Promote the delivery of services and supports to foster families
- Support quality foster care by promoting excellence and best practice
- Provide services and supports to state and local foster parent associations
- Develop and provide education and training, information, dissemination of information to the public
- Advocate at the local, state and national level; promote networking and collaboration
- Promote positive image of family foster care; greater visibility; and encourage active involvement

As a member of the all-volunteer State Affiliate Advisory Council, Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine & The Kinship Program is able to meet with leaders from other states who also provide supports to adoptive, foster, and kinship caregivers. Council meeting discussions focus on what works well and what the challenges are for each state followed by the Council's recommendations to the NFPA Board in how respond to the issues. On-going council initiatives include but are not limited to: helping the NFPA develop position statements on specific foster care issues, identifying the trending training/education themes for foster parents, and organizing public awareness campaigns. A few of the national speakers that present at AFFM's annual statewide Conference are identified first by the NFPA and are deemed perhaps, to be the most relevant, informative, and engaging speakers in the United States today. It is an asset for AFFM to be able to talk with leaders from other states about what AFFM does for families. It gives AFFM the ability to gain their perspective about the ways AFFM provides supports and advocates for Maine families, and provides the opportunity for AFFM to demonstrate its leadership within the greater foster care community. At this year's NFPA mid-year meeting our very own Jim Hatch was nominated and voted in as the Council of State Affiliates Vice-Chairman. Barbara Ford, AFFM Board President, will continue to serve as Maine's representative on the Council while Jim will work with the Council to carry out NFPA's work at the national level.

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine & The Kinship Program encourages families and other professionals to consider becoming individual members of the NFPA. For a \$35 yearly membership fee, NFPA provides members additional information and support. The NFPA has an online newsletter, offers youth scholarships, provides public policy updates, has a giveaway drawing of wooden play sets (made in Maine), and offers a clearing house of other supports and services.

For more information about the National Foster Parent Association, please visit [www.nfpaonline.org](http://www.nfpaonline.org)

## Kinship Corner

AFFM partnered with DHHS and the University Center on Aging in developing a statewide kinship network. The group has met monthly for the past several months and is growing in a steady and positive manner. The group has grown together to make a concerted effort to share what is available now for kinship providers and to explore what is needed and how best to fill the unmet needs of this amazing population of caregivers. Below are the goals formulated thus far by the network. If you have ideas on things that might add to the network, please call Sheila or Sandra at AFFM 1-800-833-9786.

1. Provide a forum for dialogue among those provider programs and agencies, who share a similar mission with regard to serving kinship care providers.
2. Provide an opportunity for kinship caregivers to share their views and give voice to strengths and challenges.
3. To encourage shared programs/ resources in order increase access of services to kinship caregivers
4. Assess need for and provide information to the caregivers of possible financial resources available to them.
5. Identify training and program development needs
6. To develop a resource manual/ website
7. To educate the general public regarding the value of kinship care
8. Provide guidance to legal counsel
9. Train legal representatives on issues of kinship care
10. Identify and ultimately reduce barriers to services for kinship caregivers
11. To educate - a variety of stakeholders regarding the value of kinship care
12. Encourage healthy self-care among kin caregivers (physical and mental health)
13. Train/ educate mental health providers on various aspects of kinship specific issues for both children and their caregivers
14. Propose plans that will further the cause of kinship care
15. Provide a forum to collaborate with state and local agencies



# Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine, Inc. & The Kinship Program



## 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 and Facebook. Families are urged to call or email [info@affm.net](mailto:info@affm.net) to be added to this service. For more information and to RSVP for the support groups please call AFFM @ 1-800-833-9786 or 827-2331. AFFM asks families to RSVP 3-4 days in advance so the facilitator and childcare provide can plan accordingly.

**Key:** A= Adoptive, F=Foster, K= Kinship, CC= Child care is available upon request

**Augusta** – Kinship only: 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month from 6:00 – 8:00 pm call Jan Partridge at 207-495-3864.

**Augusta** – A/F/K/CC: 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm at Magic Years Center (25 Industrial Drive).

**Bangor** – Kinship only/CC: 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 6—8 pm.304 Hancock St. Suite 2B. 1-866-298-0896.

**Belfast**—A/F/K/CC: 2nd Monday of the month from 6:00-7:30PM @ Parish House St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church (95 Court St.)

**Biddeford** – Kinship only/CC: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 10:00 – 11:30 @ J Richard Martin Community Center, 189 Alfred St.

**Bridgton** – A/F/K: 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month from 6:30 – 8:30 pm at the Community Care (Behind Reny’s) 15 Depot St. RSVP Vanessa Jones 647-2317

**Brunswick** – A/F/K/CC: 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month from 5:30 – 7:00 pm at St Paul’s Episcopal Church, 25 Pleasant St. Meetings are not held during Summer.

**Caribou** – A/F/K: 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month from 5:30 at Caribou Adult Education Building on Bennett Drive in between Caribou

**Dover-Foxcroft** – A/F/K/CC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm at Mayo Regional Hospital, Borestone & Sebec rm.

**Ellsworth** – A/F/K/CC: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 5:00 – 7:00 pm at Ellsworth Elementary Middle School, 20 Forest Ave.

**Farmington** – A/F/K/CC: every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 6 – 7:30 pm @ Roberts Learning Center (room 201 & 205), UMF.

**Houlton** – A/F/K/CC: every 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month from 5:30 – 7:30 pm at Houlton CHCS, 2 Water Street.

**Lewiston** – A/F/K/CC: every 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month from 6:00 – 8:00 pm at B Street Community Center in Lewiston.

**Lincoln** – A/F/K/CC: 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month from 6:00–7:30PM at the Community Evangel Temple, 124 River Rd. .

**Machias** – A/F/K/CC: 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the month from 5:30 – 7:30 pm @ Rose M Gaffney Elementary School, 15 Rose Gaffney Rd

**Orono** – A/F/K/CC: 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month from 6:00 – 8:00 pm at AFFM (34 Main Street Orono).

**Portland**– A/F/K/CC: 2nd Tuesday of the month from 5:30-7:30pm at 901 Washington Ave. Portland.

**Presque Isle** – A/F/K/CC: 3rd Tuesday of the month from 6:30 – 7:30 pm at the Wesleyan Church (387 Centerline Rd.)

**Rockland**—A/F/K/CC: 3rd Monday of the month at 6:00PM-7:30PM at the Knox Center-Pen Bay Healthcare (6 White Street)

**Saco**—A/F/K/CC: 4th Wednesday of the month from 5:30PM-7:30PM at (333 Lincoln Street, AFFM Saco Office).

**Sherman** – A/F/K: 1<sup>st</sup> 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 in the summer.

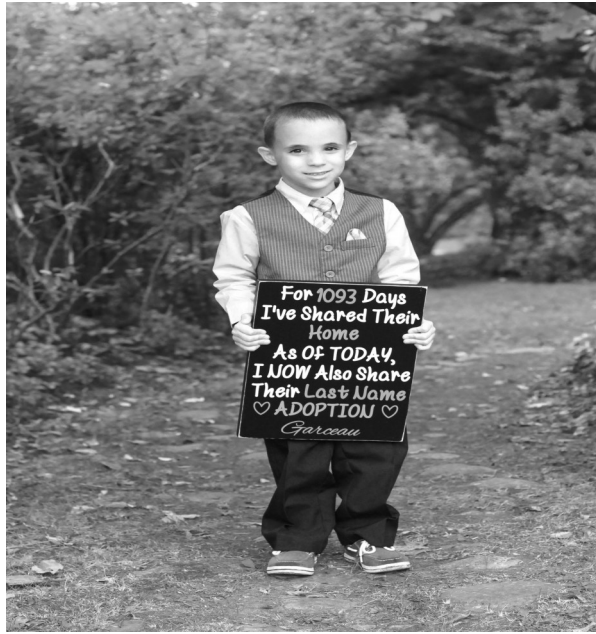
**South Paris**– A/F/K/CC: 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm at the Paris Public Library, 37 Market Square.

**Waterboro** – A/F: every 4 Thursday of the month from 6:30 – 7:30 pm at Waterboro Town Hall, 24 Townhouse Road, East Waterboro. Please contact Brigid at [brigid.maaffsg@gmail.com](mailto:brigid.maaffsg@gmail.com) or RSVP to AFFM at 1-800-833-9786.



## Adoption Announcements!

Chad and Staci Garceau are excited to announce the adoption of their son Jonathan Garceau on August 27, 2015. The Garceau's would like to thank all their family and friends for all their love and support along the way.



Our family is pleased to announce the adoption of our beautiful daughter, Desirae Ouellette on August 11, 2015! Our family was blessed in August of 2014 when Desi first came into our lives. Since then, she has brought so much happiness and love to our family. She has grown so much over the past year and has taught us just as much as we have taught her. We were very lucky that all went smoothly throughout the process and want to thank Desi's caseworker Chad Kelley and her adoption worker Nate Defelice. They were both amazing and helped us every step of the way. The adoption day was amazing as we were surrounded by family and friends and of course Chad and Nate. We couldn't be happier to have Desi join our family and we would encourage all families to take a leap of faith and foster, children of all ages deserve a forever family.

~ Keith & Erica Ouellette and big sister Sierra Ouellette



Have you recently legalized an adoption? Want to share the exciting news with others? AFFM would love to create an adoption announcement in the Family Ties newsletter. Send a write up and photo (if you wish) to [meagan@affm.net](mailto:meagan@affm.net) or call the office at 827-2331. AFFM looks forward to hearing from you!



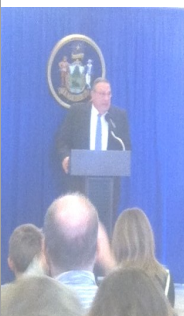
# Adoption Awareness Month Recap

*Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine & The Kinship Program once again had the pleasure of celebrating Adoption Awareness month in November with the many amazing resource families across the state, as well as the Office of Children and Families Service, the Department of Health and Human Services and private agencies.*

On November 2nd adoption legalizations took place at the Portland's Children Museum & Theatre of Maine. 21 adoptions were legalized on this special day! The Heart Gallery was hung in the front stairway of the museum to remind folks that there are still children awaiting their forever homes. Guest snacked on treats donated by Coffee by Design and enjoyed exploring the museum! Further North, the Bangor Children's museum opened their doors to recently adoptive families to celebrate. Fun was had by all who attended. Thank you to both museums for allowing families to celebrate their adoptions in a special way.



November 10th OCFS held an awareness event in Augusta at the Hall of Flags. Attendees enjoyed treats and activities provided by the agency tables present. Guest speakers included Director of OCFS James Martin, Commissioner Mary Mayhew, Governor LePage and Janine and Brandon Deas, all honoring adoptive families and all resource families in Maine. The August Boys Singing Choir finished off the event with three beautiful songs.



On November 12th AFFM held the annual tea at the Blaine House. The day was filled with speakers recognizing resource families for the amazing work they do. Executive Director Bette Hoxie and AFFM Board President Barbara Ford welcomed families and First Lady Ann LePage read a 2015 recognition letter by Governor LePage. Bette introduced the two Angel in Adoption recipients Laurie and Jeff Legere and Representative Craig Hickman. Barbara Ford introduced her son Joel Ford who shared his perspective on adoption. Lily Muscatel ended the celebration with her beautiful singing voice. Thank you to all who attended and of course a huge thank you to the Blaine House and staff for once again hosting the event.



November 16th the Children's Discovery Museum in Augusta opened their doors for a few hours allowing adoptive families to explore the museum and celebrate. AFFM provide snacks and give aways. It was a fun event had by all!

November 21st York county celebrated National Adoption Day by legalizing 8 adoptions at the York County Probate Court!

A special thank you to Senator Angus King for providing AFFM with a Congressional Record observing November as Adoption Awareness Month. (Congressional Record can be read in full on the next page). Thank you to all those who once again made this November so special for adoptive families!







United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2015

No. 163

## Senate

### OBSERVING ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. KING. Mr. President, each November we celebrate National Adoption Awareness Month to recognize the families that choose to adopt and the organizations that support them. During this month, we honor those who welcome these children into their homes and hearts, help them to grow to their full potential, and give them a better future. Today I would like to draw attention to the importance of adoption and raise awareness about youth in foster care programs, especially in Maine.

There are over 400,000 children in the foster care system, many of them waiting and hoping that the right family will come to adopt them. While many of these children are successfully returned to their birth parents and relatives, almost half are left in the system to fend for themselves. The absence of a stable family structure can be disastrous for children who are still developing psychologically and are trying to find their way in the world.

This issue has very real impacts on the future of these children and our society as a whole. Young adults who age out of the foster care system before being placed with a family are at a significantly higher risk for homelessness, incarceration, and unemployment. Alternatively, children who are adopted from foster care are more likely to achieve academic success and emotional security than their counterparts who remain in foster care. Nearly 80 percent of Americans, myself included, believe that more should be done to encourage adoption; yet, each year, tens of thousands of available children remain in the system, without families. Every child deserves to grow up in a permanent, safe, and loving home. This month, as we thank all those who have opened their hearts and homes to these children, we must acknowledge that there is still much work ahead of us.

I am proud of the important roles Maine citizens have played in promoting adoption awareness. Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine, Inc., AFFM, has been instrumental in helping children find the security they deserve and in providing support to the families who welcome them into their homes. Fostering or adopting a child can be an emotional process, and AFFM offers many services to all Maine adoptive families, including support groups, resource mentors, material goods, and a referral database for legal matters and mental health support. The adoption process is an emotional, transformative, and sometimes even stressful time for children and for their new families; therefore, the services provided by AFFM are an integral aspect of cultivating safe, joyful adoptions across the State. I have witnessed their hard work in action, and I am proud of all they have done for families and children across Maine.

My wife, Mary, and I have been blessed with two adoptions. I know firsthand what an amazing process adoption can be. Our experience would not have been possible without the loving support of our family, friends and community. Mary and I have been so fortunate with the joy all of our children bring to our lives every day, and I am proud to celebrate National Adoption Awareness Month.

I would like to recognize and thank Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine, Inc., and all others who facilitate adoptions throughout the country and make it possible for children in foster care to find their forever homes. Selfless, caring individuals and programs like AFFM help bring children one step closer to their dreams. They offer the hope of love and security to future generations, and for that, they deserve our immense gratitude.



## Discounts and Donations!

### Sweet Repeats

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Freeport, ME

351-0137

10% off all purchases

[www.sweetrepeatsmaine.com](http://www.sweetrepeatsmaine.com)



*Sweet Repeats*  
**Children's Consignment**

*AFFM would like to send a special thank you to all of the business who participate in the Discount Card Program. If you have a suggestion for a business or organization that AFFM can approach to participate in the discount card program, please contact us. You can also print off and send a completed business application form to 34 Main St. Orono, ME 04473. Business application form can be found at <http://www.affm.net/services/discount-card-program/>*

**Did you know AFFM's Saco office receives weekly donations from Plato's Closet in South Portland and Tots to Teens in Gorham?**

**AFFM's Saco office also receives donations from Birth Roots in Portland!**

If you are in need of clothing or baby items contact Meagan at [meagan@affm.net](mailto:meagan@affm.net) or call 1-800-833-9786 we may have what you're looking for! AFFM's Saco office is located at 333 Lincoln Street

AFFM appreciates the generous donations and the continued partnership to help support resource families of Maine!



## Thank You!

**AFFM would like to thank the following businesses and individuals for all their support:**

Coffee By Design in Portland for donating treats to the adoption legalizations on November 2nd.

Maine Discovery Museum Bangor for allowing post adoptive families to celebrate Adoption Awareness Month.

Children's Discovery Museum Augusta for also opening their doors and allowing adoptive families to celebrate.

Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine Portland for once again providing a fun environment for 21 families who legalized their adoptions on November 2nd!

Mary Mitten's for holding a hat/mitten/scarf drive for those who may not have much access to these items.

Mary Lake for her continued support and her famous Mary Lake Dresses!

Jockey Being Family for providing backpacks to recently adopted children and adoptive parents

### Are you prepared for the cold months ahead?

Whether we like it or not winter is coming. Be proactive this year and know what assistance may be available to you. Check out <http://www.mainehousing.org/programs-services/energy/energydetails/low-income-home-energy-assistance-program> for information on Low income home energy assistance program (LIHEAP). Local churches and towns offer general assistance as well. Stay warm this winter!

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.  
34 Main Street, Orono, ME 04473

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

Partnering With: Department of Health and Human Services

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

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## Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine, Inc. & The Kinship Program

***New Resource Families Welcome! You are now receiving the Family Ties newsletter as part of your complimentary membership to AFFM! Learn more about AFFM and services offered by calling 1-800-833-9786 or visit [www.affm.net](http://www.affm.net)***

**Locations:** 34 Main Street, Orono, Maine

& 333 Lincoln Street, Saco, Maine

**Phone:** 1-800-833-9786

**Email:** [info@affm.net](mailto:info@affm.net)

**After Hour Emergency Support:** 207-745-4159

**Website:** [www.affm.net](http://www.affm.net)

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