

Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

Volume 19 Number 1

Newsletter

January 2016

AFFM Year in Review

AFFM completed a gift giving campaign that began in August and culminated on Dec 24, 2015. Nearly 1,000 children were the recipients of toys, clothing, gift cards and so much more! The offices of AFFM with the help of numerous volunteers accomplished a feat majestic to behold. The staff helped families seek out the perfect gifts and or the much needed winter jackets snow pants and boots. Once items were located the more difficult job of getting the items to families was completed. It is no small effort to get packages from one end of this state to the other! Thank you for all who made light the work.

Thank you sincerely to all who contributed to the joy and treasures of this special season of caring. 11 years ago, our wonderful friends at the Ogunquit Spirit of Giving Committee started using AFFM as a sponsoring agency when they set the plan in motion to provide presents to children and families in need. The giving practice has grown so much that the Ogunquit Spirit of Giving Committee provided gifts to over 700 children. While AFFM secured sponsors for 300 additional children. Thank you seems too small a response for all that has been provided.

If your child/children are among the many that received gifts and you wish to express your appreciation, feel free to address notes to AFFM and the office will share your thoughts with the many who made the children's wishes come true! Some of us were able to hand gifts to families and viewed first-hand the gratitude and obvious joy of the receivers. It is a small number that actually see the responses so cards and notes help. If you have pictures that can be shared of your children with their gifts remember a picture is worth a thousand words!

In addition to all the holiday gift giving program, AFFM held holiday parties. Holiday parties were held in Bangor and Portland. Nearly 160 children attended the two events in addition to their caregivers, family members and many volunteers. A potluck was provided at the party in Bangor and pizza was provided at the Portland party. 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 and children created lovely handmade decorations and crafts.

Thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Claus for taking time from your busy schedules to join us at both parties. The holiday parties grow each year and the ratings are always nearly 100% satisfaction. We love that the parents/caretakers assist with the children as many hands make it a merrier time.

AFFM was honored to partner with DHHS offices in Augusta, Machias, Ellsworth and Rockland this year to provide books a stuffed toy to each child attending. In several DHHS Districts, AFFM also provided door prizes for adults attending. The DHHS staff and management provided gifts and did much of the planning and supervision. Thank you to all!

As part of supports to kin specific families, AFFM was again honored to provide an American Girl doll which was raffled by the Augusta kinship support group. The proceeds of that raffle will be used to support a child to attend a summer music camp. AFFM also provided books etc. to add to the holiday gathering held by the kinship support group. Thank you to Jan Strout and Jan Partridge for establishing this opportunity.

The numbers of kinship families AFFM assists continues to grow. The office serves over 1600 unlicensed kinship homes and nearly as many that are licensed. AFFM staff are frequently present at Family Team Meetings to provide systems education and neutral support and guidance to both kin providers and foster resource families. AFFM strives 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 get together the opportunities for positive

permanency outcomes increase.

At the request of members, AFFM has been involved in two legislative proposals that are kinship specific. The first is a proposal pertaining to an Educational Medical Waiver and the latter is related to the Defacto Guardianship Law currently in Maine Law. AFFM also did some educating pertaining to a proposed Foster Parent Bill Of Rights.

DHHS hosted an amazing event at the Hall of Flags which jump started the Adoption Awareness activities observed across the State. A tea was co-hosted by Maine's First Lady, Ann LePage, the staff of the Blaine House and AFFM on Nov12, 2015.

A letter to adoptive families and those who support them was read by Maine's First Lady, Ann Lepage. AFFM was honored to receive a Presidential Proclamation from President Obama as well as a Congressional Record in honor of Adoption Awareness Month provided by Senator Angus King.

A special recognition was made to two Angel in Adoption recipients. This honor is made possible through Maine's congressional representatives, Senator Angus King and Senator Susan Collins. Recipients this year for 2015 Angel in Adoption award went to Jeff and Laurie Legere of Bradley and Representative and adoptive parent, Craig Hickman of Winthrop. AFFM Board President, Barbara Ford also shared kind words of praise and celebration. Barbara and Ed Ford's son shared brief words of his experience as an only birth child in a family of numerous adopted children. Other guests at the tea in addition to adoptive families and their children included, both private and public adoption workers and adoptive families, the staff and several Board of Directors for AFFM as well as several DHHS adoption staff and supervisors. The individual stories shared were heartwarming and so indicative of the wonderful families who add to or form their through adoptions of Maine's children. Maine continues to make getting youth to permanency a priority and it is never more obvious than during Adoption Awareness Month.

AFFM was fortunate once again to partner with the probate court to legalize of adoptions at the Children Museum and Theatre of Maine in Portland. We were able to celebrate adoptions legalized in the 3 months prior to Nov. at the children's Museums in Augusta and Bangor. The museums are such a fun place for children and families to celebrate their special day.

AFFM has partnered with the Jockey Being Family Program to provide backpacks to the children who were legalized in the past 3 months. The program also provides a bag with assorted post adoption supports to the new adoptive parents. This program will continue through October 31, 2016.

AFFM appreciated the opportunity to partner with the Maine Association of Family Organizations (MAFO) to provide a conference on Transition Planning and with Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to provide a conference on Substance Abuse and Pregnancy in Portland. Both conferences were well attended and extremely informative.

On Thanksgiving Day 2015, the Red Knights provided a dinner fundraiser event with all the trimmings. The dinner was open to the public and the group raised \$1400 for AFFM. Thank you to this amazing group!

A large percentage of the kinship caregivers are grand or great grandparents hence AFFM celebrated kinship families by hosting statewide events in honor of National Grandparent's Day in September. Families from the greater Portland, Orono and Augusta areas were treated to a pizza party and assorted gifts for the children and their kinship caregivers. It is the hope of AFFM to expand the kinship celebrations to be more inclusive next year. Thanks go to Pat's Pizza in Orono, Pizza Hut in Augusta and Uno's in Portland for supporting these events.

In August, in collaboration with DHHS District 5 (Augusta & Skowhegan), AFFM hosted the 8th Annual 5k Run at the New Balance outlet on Skowhegan. Funds collected from the run assisted the district office in providing the annual holiday party for youth and resource parents in that district.

After 18 years at the Old Town location, AFFM moved to its current suite of offices at 34 Main St. in Orono on July 3, 2015.

An Open House was held shortly after the move. We are all excited to share this new space. It is a professional atmosphere but lends itself well to meetings and small trainings and the Network of Support Meetings that take place monthly. We also maintain an office in Saco.

During June, July and August six families were able to use the wonderful Tamarack Cottage in Rangeley over the summer. Thank you so much to Mary Higgins and Mary Henderson for making cottage available for the 18th straight year! The heartwarming stories and the memories built there each year are now historical and cherished! A journal is kept at AFFM that includes the personal stories of the families who have utilized Tamarack Cottage over the years.

In August, Bette Hoxie represented AFFM at the North American Council on Adoptable children's (NACAC) Conference in Long Beach. Bette serves as the Adoption Subsidy Representative for the State of Maine to NACAC.

Over 40 youth were supported to attend summer camps as a result of donations to AFFM and the coordinating efforts of Sheila, our Kinship Specialist in our Orono office. In addition to summer camp scholarships, Sheila also coordinated efforts to secure over 150 tickets to fairs and other family events at the request of families. 500 State Park passes were utilized by 500 licensed resource parents. 800 passes to the Wild Animal Park in Gray were provided.

AFFM assisted families in celebrating National Foster Care Month in May with its 11th annual Foster Day at the Fort event. Nearly 300 individuals enjoyed food, entertainment, and child friendly activities on a gorgeous summer like day. Thank you to The Friends of Fort Knox who are so open to helping us continue this annual event. Thank you also to board members who do so much to help get picnic items to and from the fort, and keep games, entertainment, giveaways, etc. moving! Thanks to our spirited team of volunteers who so lovingly shop and cook and serve the food. Thank you to DHHS district 6 (Bangor) staff for donating raffled gift baskets and to the several private foster care placement agencies who provided face painting and games to help add to the festivities. All who help are super helpers and are very much appreciated! Watch the Family Ties for information about this year's event.

In June Meagan Sprague and newly hired staff Courtney Leeman and Sandra Snow in our Saco office, along with volunteers Tammy Cutchen and Meghan Painton planned, coordinated and supervised the 3rd annual Mackworth Island Gathering. A beautiful day and wonderful time was shared by many. Make plans to attend the event this coming June.

On a very cloudy/rainy day in late June, Travis and Bette represented AFFM at the 2nd annual Rock & Ride for Kids at the Unity Field of Dreams. The event brings awareness to adoption, foster, and kinship care as well as serves as a fundraising event for AFFM. The event was set in motion by adoptive parents, Chris and Brandy Bowles and their biker friends of the Red Knights Maine Chapter IX Motorcycle Club. This year's event brought in money that supported the purchase of bikes and other items for children in care. Bikes were presented to two delighted youth at the event. The Red Knights under Brandy's guidance will provide a similar ride in July 2016 which will again be held at the Unity Park. All foster, adoptive and kinship families are encouraged to attend. Thank you, Brandy, Chris, Brandy's Mother, the Red Knights and all who helped to make the second event a success. Watch the Family Ties and affm.net for news of this exciting upcoming event.

In April AFFM held a fabulous 2 day conference in Portland. Two superb keynote presenters, Sue Badeau and Dr. John DeGarmo as well as a host of excellent presenters from Maine rounded out the conference. At the luncheon on Friday of the conference, AFFM and DHHS honored numerous case workers, a legislator, resource parents, and other child welfare advocates for their exemplary work on behalf of children and families in Maine. Prepare now for the 2016 conference on April 15-16. held at the Augusta Civic Center.

In March Jim Hatch continued to train mentors to be added to the growing number then serving to support and guide newly licensed resource parents. To date there are 66 mentors and many of those individuals are acting as Mentors to multiple individuals. If you or someone you know thinks you might like to consider becoming the listening ear and guide for other resource parents please call the licensing supervisor in your district or Jim Hatch in our Orono office to learn more in how to get involved.

In February, AFFM sponsored the annual roller skating party at Great Skates in Bangor during school vacation week. 101 families (children and adults) attended this years event. AFFM is saddened to report that this event will not be provided in 2016 due to Great Skates closing. However, AFFM is thinking of other ways to provide a similar event this February and after receiving feedback from the parent of a child with disability, AFFM will be thinking outside of the box to offer an event that is more inclusive of all abilities.

Throughout the year AFFM is honored to have student interns who volunteer their time to AFFM while adding to their educational background. They learn as they assist in the day to day projects and conversations, trainings etc. that go on here at AFFM. This year we were delighted to have 4 interns from Husson University as well as one from UMO. Beginning later this month we will have an intern from UMA in Bangor and a post graduate will be housed in the Saco Office.

Bette, Meagan, Jim and Sheila assist in 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 AFFM staff to assist you.

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 400 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.

Thanks again to Toys for Tots, who provided more than a fair share of items that AFFM provided to youth celebrating birthdays. Many thanks go to our partners at Bed Bath and Beyond in Augusta, Bangor and Topsham. They provide beautiful bedding, pillows, curtains and an assortment of household goods. 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.

In October AFFM met with a group of students under the direction of Elizabeth Johns at the School of Social Work at UMO. The students will research barriers to accessing resources unlicensed kinship providers. This project is the second in a series of surveys to research the kinship topics. The project is a collaborative between AFFM and the UMaine Center on Aging and will culminate with an extensive report in April.

AFFM is blessed to have active board members who help out with the mission of AFFM in so many ways. We at the AFFM office extend a very special thank you to our Board of Directors..

Each member brings special gifts and I don't have space to list their various merits but trust me when I say AFFM continues to exist due to their amazing talents and their dedication to the families we serve.

The Family Ties newsletter continues to grow under the direction of Community Resource Development Coordinator, Meagan Sprague. Meagan was also instrumental in the success of events celebrated during National Adoption Awareness Month and the very delightful adoption tea at the Blaine House.

Meagan represents AFFM on several foster adoption and kinship care related committees and represents AFFM to the New England Foster Care Association (NEFCA).

Cindy Lilley is the cheery and efficient voice most will hear first when they call the AFFM offices. Cindy is our Administrative Specialist and keeps our books and records straight.

Thanks to Cindy and her work with the Ogunquit Spirit of Giving Committee and other donors nearly 1000 children received gifts on time for the holiday this year. Cindy kept all the requests straight while doing all her other work!

Debbie Irish continues to be steadfast in her support and contributions of handmade wares and so much more! Debbie as always thank you never seems quite adequate for all the blessings that you provide. Debbie never asks for anything in return and always has a dozen projects going at once but is never without a smile! Debbie is also a support group leader in Sherman and that group like Debbie is very supportive of families with children in need. Annually they provide food baskets and holiday gifts to nearly a dozen area families.

Our dear friend, Mary Lake had contemplated retiring her treadle sewing machine but just couldn't break an old and faithful habit. Mary provided dresses both in the spring and the fall of this past year. She also made numerous other donations of new clothing to AFFM. IF you have a little girl who would like a pretty homemade cotton dress with a matching shoulder bag please call AFFM. Sizes available are 4-6 and 8.

Our Program and Research Specialist, Jim Hatch has been busy on numerous committees throughout the year. Jim takes an active role in all aspects of the AFFM office responsibilities. Jim has developed an expanded Mentor Program statewide. Jim is often the voice at the end of the phone as resource parents seek various aspects of system's education and practical approaches to foster care and adoption. It is hoped that mentors will be available to all licensed resource families and will be expanded to include all licensed and non-licensed homes who request a mentor by 2017. If you are in need of a mentor or interested in becoming a mentor please call and speak with Jim. Jim represented AFFM at the Mid-Year meeting of the national Foster Parent Association. That meeting begins the preparation for the annual training conference which will be held in June.

Kinship Specialist, Sheila Peakall works with countless kinship families. There is an amazing increase in the number of kinship families in this program and we are fortunate to have Sheila conscientiously and tirelessly working to answer questions on a myriad of topics. Sheila also responds to the needs of families for material goods, provides opportunities to network and socialize with others providing kinship care across the state. Sheila and Sandra Snow serve on the newly formed Kinship Network.

Jim, Sheila and Meagan have all been diligent in their efforts to expand support groups all over the state of Maine. They have partnered with some existent groups and or begun new groups where none previously existed. Child-care is available upon request to insure that those who want to take advantage of the support groups can do so without worry about the care of their children while in attendance.

Travis Bryant collaborates with DHHS licensing staff to provide the fundamentals training to newly recruited resource parents as well as kinship providers. Travis has 3 staff that assists him in the delivery of trainings. The trainers are, Joy Young of Dixfield, Shirley Ross of Starks and Gail Neher of Cary Plantation. 2016 will mark some changes to the schedule of training units. Travis, like all of the AFFM, does not limit himself exclusively to training and is involved in all aspects of the issues attended to by AFFM. He has partnered with Meagan in updating the website, increasing visibility on Facebook and Twitter as well as the listserv.

AFFM is fortunate to have such a knowledgeable and gifted staff who have a wide range of skills and expertise from both personal and educational enrichment.

Executive Director, Bette Hoxie continues to provide supervision to the expanding staff, participates in a number of committees significant to resource families and child welfare, provides training, and regularly, provides individual support to resource parents.

The newest part time staff members are Paul Leonard our Assistant Research Specialist in Orono, Courtney Lee-man, our Resource Family Support Specialist who assists Meagan in the Saco office and Sandra Snow our Kinship Specialist in our Saco office.

This highlights some of the ways AFFM serves resource parents within its partnership with DHHS and as a statewide nonprofit association.

Thank you to all who have assisted in so many ways throughout this past year. We at AFFM look forward to continuing to grow with you as we work together to improve the quality of life for Maine's resource families, the children in their care and all Maine families.

Have a happy, safe and love filled New Year!

Meet Anthony and Nicholas!

Anthony, D.O.B. 10/20/10 is a handsome young man with a sweet temperament. He is placed with his older brother, Nicholas, age 7.

Anthony is currently attending preschool and though behind developmentally, has made significant gains during the last year. He is a sweet boy who enjoys playing outside, swimming, watching TV Sponge Bob Square Pants is a favorite!

Nicholas, D.O.B.12/12/07, just started the first grade and is working at grade level. He is a rather reserved young man, enjoys playing outside but also enjoys playing with Legos, watching TV and playing video games.

Anthony and Nicholas had their first experiences camping and fishing this summer, which they both enjoyed. They are two young men who are ready to be a part of a loving family!

Nancy Bolduc, MSW
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Adoption Announcements!



We are blessed to announce the adoption of our amazing daughter, Emily Lampron on November 2, 2015. We are one of the lucky families who got to participate in the Children's Museum adoptions this year. After being with us for 658 days in foster care, she is forever ours. We are beyond grateful to God for giving us such a sweet and spunky gift in our precious girl Emily! She joins big sister Gloria, and also baby sister Felicity.

- Adam & Kerrie-Lee Lampron

Bridget and Jim are so happy to announce the adoption of their son, Myles James, on August 10, 2015! Bridget and Jim first met Myles when he was two days old and brought him home from the hospital in August 2014. Bridget and Jim would like to thank everyone who helped along the way through the foster toward adoption process. Bridget and Jim could not have asked for a better team of caseworkers, lawyers, etc. THANK YOU!



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
AFFM looks forward to hearing from you!

Kinship Corner

Generations United released their latest report, [The State of Grandfamilies in America: 2015](#). This second edition of the annual State of Grandfamilies in America report identified key state laws and policies specifically designed to address barriers and better support the diverse and unique population of grandparents and other relatives raising children. To identify states with the most promising laws and policies to support Grandfamilies, Generations United used the following criteria: Percentage of children in foster care who are placed with relatives, education and health care consent laws, de facto custody laws, policies that eliminate barriers to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and opt-ins to the following federal programs: National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), Guardian Assistance Program (GAP), and Lifespan Respite. The study found: All states had at least one grandfamily-friendly law or policy. No state scored 100% and had all of the laws and policies. Compared to previous years, on average states are doing a better job placing children with relatives when they must enter foster care.

To read the full report visit: <http://gu.org/RESOURCES/Publications/TheStateofGrandfamiliesinAmerica2015.aspx>



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 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 provider can plan accordingly.

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

Augusta – Kinship only: 3rd Wednesday of the month from 5:30 – 8:00 pm at the Buker Community Center (22 Armory Drive Augusta) call Jan Partridge at 207-495-3864.

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

Bangor – Kinship only/CC: 1st and 3rd 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: 3rd Tuesday of the month from 10:00 – 11:30 @ J Richard Martin Community Center, 189 Alfred St.

Bridgton – A/F/K: 3rd 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: 4th 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: 1st Thursday of the month from 5:30 at Caribou Adult Education Building on Bennett Drive in between Caribou Rec and the gas station.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Machias **NEW TIME & DATE**– A/F/K/CC: 4th Thursday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm @ Rose M Gaffney Elementary School, 15 Rose Gaffney Rd

Orono – A/F/K/CC: 3rd 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: 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 in the summer.

NEW Skowhegan— A/F/K/CC: 2nd Tuesday of the month from 6:00-7:30pm at New Horizon Church (31 East Madison Road).

South Paris – A/F/K/CC: 1st 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 or RSVP to AFFM at 1-800-833-9786.

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Generations United

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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

Locations: 34 Main Street, Orono, Maine

& 333 Lincoln Street, Saco. Maine

Phone: 1-800-833-9786

Email: info@affm.net

After Hour Emergency Support: 207-745-4159

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