



Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

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December 2019

Year in Review

Before we head into a new decade(!), AFFM would like to take a moment to reflect on all 2019 had to offer.

The beginning of the year AFFM held their annual February vacation events. The Saco office invited families to Urban Air Adventure Park in South Portland and the Orono office had their event at Bangor Brewer Bowling Lanes. 2020 events will be announced soon! Keep an eye out!

AFFM held the 22nd Annual Spring Training Conference in Bangor on April 12th and 13th at the Hilton Garden Inn. The conference, “Trauma and the Aftermath: Recognizing the Issues, Working Towards Solutions” focused on the opioid epidemic and ways to support all who have been affected. AFFM was pleased to have two very dynamic keynote speakers, Bill Cumming and Judith Josiah-Martin PhD, ACSW, CADC, who shared their expertise on the subject and gave attendees great tips on how to care for the children in their homes as well as the importance of caring for themselves. The breakout sessions all proved to be just as powerful. During Friday’s lunch AFFM, along with OCFS, recognized and honored resource families who go above and beyond in their district and have actively supported permanency efforts for children in care. AFFM also honored the professionals who actively support permanency efforts for children in care as well as excel in supporting positive outcomes for children and families. Next year’s conference will be in South Portland at the DoubleTree on April 17th-18th 2020, we hope you’re able to attend!

On May 18th AFFM celebrated Foster Care Awareness Month with the 18th annual Foster Family Day at the Fort. Though the weather wasn’t the best, families still gathered for a barbeque, live entertainment, a petting zoo and giveaways. Thank you to The Friends of Fort Knox for allowing this event to occur every year. See you in 2020!

AFFM’s Saco office would like to thank Ferry Beach Park Association for once again allowing our families to celebrate a “Family Fun Day” and enjoy the beautiful surroundings on Saturday June 29th. A huge thank you to Josh from Sparks Ark, who captivated the children (and adults!) with his stories and many creatures! A “Family Fun Day” was also held at Mantle Lake Park in Presque Isle. Thank you to all that contributed to each event. Keep an eye out for these events next year!

AFFM once again collaborated with the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust to offer 10 families the chance of a weekend getaway to Tamarack and Mary Higgin’s home in Rangeley. AFFM was sad to hear of the passing of our good friend Mary Higgins on January 8, 2019. Mary was a cheerleader for the former Maine Foster Parent Assoc. and this continued for the past 21 years with AFFM. Together with Mary Henderson, the two women worked tirelessly to honor the request of Wilhelm Reich, that his summer home would be used for children. AFFM remains grateful for the wonderful partnership with

Children's Trust Fund. Thank you to Mary Henderson and Ethna L. Thompson for all your support in organizing this opportunity for families this year.

To round out the summer, AFFM was excited to be able to offer camp scholarships this year to 82 youth in care!

To kick off the 2019 school year, AFFM once again filled close to 400 backpacks through the Ready Set Go to Learn Program. Thank you to those that donated clothing, school supplies, personal care items, backpacks, and most of all your time to this program.

The beginning of the Fall also brings the celebration of Grandparents Day! Thank you to the lovely folks at the Desert of Maine in Freeport for allowing families to come explore! If you haven't been to the Desert of Maine, it's a must. Don't forget your discount card when you visit, they offer free tours with it! Thank you to Camp G. Peirce Webber in Hampden for the fun filled day as well. Families had access to in-ground pool, zip line, hiking trails, sports field, and playground! AFFM is pleased to be able to arrange events such as this for the incredible families providing kinship care.

AFFM continues to seek out resources and hold events for kinship families in the state of Maine. With that said, AFFM is very honored to say Orono's Kinship Specialist, Bette Hoxie has been sworn in to sit on the Federal Advisory Council, partnering with Generations United, at the end of August. The Advisory Council will identify, promote, coordinate, and disseminate to the public information, resources, and the best practices available to help grandparents and other relatives both meet the needs of the children in their care.

As every December goes, AFFM is in full "Holiday" mode. Though it's the busiest time of year, it's the most fun! AFFM's Holiday Gift Giving Program is in full swing throughout the month and over 1,000 children in care are sponsored with gifts! It can't be said enough, AFFM is so grateful for The Ogunquit Spirit of Giving Committee and all that they do for our families. AFFM is also incredibly thankful for the amazing individuals and businesses that step up to sponsor the remaining 400 plus kids with gifts. You are all truly heroes!

In addition to the Holiday Gift Giving Program, AFFM held the annual holiday parties in Bangor and South Portland. Thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Claus (Bill and Karen Labombarde) for joining us and of course for putting a smile on the kids faces!

In between all the events and planning, AFFM remains dedicated to supporting resource families throughout the year and continues to offer supports via C.A.R.E.S. meetings, listening support, the mentor service, trainings, allegation support, etc.

Thank you to the Board of Directors, trainers, interns, mentors, C.A.R.E.S. facilitators, childcare providers, and volunteers for your commitment and dedication to AFFM. Without your support and hard work, it would be difficult to achieve all that we have. You are all appreciated!

Thank you to AFFM's incredible staff;

Travis Bryant, Executive Director
Bette Hoxie, Orono Kinship Specialist & Trainer
Holly White, Administrative Assistant
Monica Bushey, Training Coordinator
Sheila Peakall, Orono Resource Support Coordinator
Heather Crooker, Orono Resource Family Specialist
Francie Criner, Accountant

Meagan Sprague, Saco Regional Program Manager
Carey Pierson, Saco Kinship Specialist
Hether Anderson, Saco Resource Support Coordinator & Trainer
Brigid Torberg, Saco Resource Family Specialist
Joy Young, Trainer
Pat Tavernakis, Trainer
Mindy Kane, Trainer
Ann Stephenson, Trainer
Sarah Hatt, Trainer

AFFM wishes you all a safe and happy New Year. We look forward to growing with you in this new decade!

Meet the Staff of AFFM!



AFFM is happy to welcome Heather Crooker as their Resource Family Specialist in the Orono office. Heather lives with her husband Mike and their three beautiful children, ages 22, 19, and 12. Heather and Mike adopted their youngest child from Michigan when she was five weeks old. Diversity and culture are very important to Heather and her family enjoy learning about their daughter's African American heritage. In her free time, Heather enjoys knitting, traveling, playing with her dogs, and spending time with family and friends. Heather has a wealth of knowledge and empathy for resource families. Heather has both professional and personal experience navigating a variety of support systems and caring for children.

Welcome to the AFFM family Heather!

Kinship Corner

Grand Resource: Help for Grandfamilies Impacted by Opioids and Other Substance Use

Grand Resource is a set of resources from Generations United that includes recommendations and resources on five topics identified by kinship caregivers as uniquely challenging for grandfamilies impacted by substance use.

[Practicing Self- Care](#)

[Addressing Childhood Trauma](#)

[Preventing Harmful Drug Use by Children](#)

[Engaging with Birth Parents](#)

[Talking with a Child About their Birth Parent](#)



More than 2.6 million children are raised by grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, other extended family and close family friends who step forward to care for them when parents cannot. With the rise in heroin and other opioid use, more relatives are raising children because the parents have died, are incarcerated, are using drugs, are in treatment or are otherwise unable to take care of their children. The vast majority of children being raised by relatives live outside the formal foster care system.

Yet the child welfare system relies heavily on relatives, so much so that about a third of all children in foster care are living with relatives. After years of decline in the overall numbers of children in foster care, the numbers began to rise in 2013. Experts say the opioid epidemic is responsible for this trend. Relatives are being asked to care for more children in foster care than ever before. And children placed in family foster care because of parental drug or alcohol use are now more likely to be placed with relatives than non-relatives. In 2016, more than a third of all children who were removed from their homes because of parental alcohol and drug use were placed with relatives. Yet the impact of parental substance use disorders on grandfamilies is not a new challenge. Grandparents and other relatives have long provided an essential safe haven for children whose parents have been unable to parent due to alcohol or other substance use and have stepped forward for children during each drug epidemic, including crack cocaine, methamphetamines and opioids.

Grandfamilies affected by substance use disorders face a range of unique social, financial, physical and mental health challenges. Despite challenges, the growing reliance on grandfamilies is best for children whose parents cannot raise them. Decades of research repeatedly confirms that children who cannot remain with their birth parents thrive when raised by relatives and close family friends. These children have more stable and safe childhoods than children raised by non-relatives. Yet relative caregivers often receive less access to supports, benefits and services to help the children, who often come into their care after experiencing significant trauma that brings significant physical, mental and behavioral health challenges.

This resource is designed to provide tips, useful information and a list of additional resources to help grandfamilies both inside and outside the foster care system impacted by opioids or other substance use.

Article from: <https://www.gu.org/resources/grand-resource-help-for-grandfamilies-impacted-by-opioids-and-other-substance-use/>

Adoption Announcements!



Ruth Lyons is excited to announce the adoption of my son Theodore Anthony Lyons on August 7, 2019



We are the Lynches and we are excited to announce the adoption of our daughter, Callianna Lynch. On September 5th, we were surrounded by friends and family to legalize her adoption. Our son, Jonathan, is thrilled to have his little sister finally share our name. We are blessed by adoption (times two) and we couldn't be happier.

Brandon and Carrie Rapp are excited to announce the adoption of Ryan and Grace on August 27, 2019. Ryan and Grace are welcomed by big brothers Rylee and Danny.



Adoption Announcements Continued!



Marlene St. Amand of Augusta, Maine is thrilled to announce the adoption of Xavier Donovan Monroe St. Amand on September 4, 2019.



Have you recently legalized an adoption? Would you like 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. Did you know that after you've adopted you are still able to access AFFM's support services? Call AFFM today to learn about post adoption support!

If a Child Under 5 Years of Age is in Your Care, Call WIC to Enroll Them Today!

The Maine Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program is a supplemental nutrition program helping Maine kids to grow up strong and healthy. **WIC provides checks for healthy foods such as:**

Bread	Eggs	Peanut Butter	Infant Formula
Cereal	Cheese	Beans	Baby Foods
Milk	Juice	Fresh fruits & vegetables	Whole grains

- Health screenings
- Individual nutrition counseling
- Referrals to health care and social service providers

We look forward to hearing from you!
1-800-437-9300 or 207-287-3991
or go online at: Wicforme.com

Feel Good Stories!

When my grandson was around four, I was looking out the kitchen window while he was playing. Then I see him look all around then run to our bamboo bushes to go pee. When he came in:

Me: *Buddy, Why did you use the bushes, when the house was closer to go pee?*

Buddy: *Nana! How did you know I peed in the bushes?*

Me: *Buddy, Don't you know, Nana's have eyes in the back of their heads so they can see everything.*

The next morning I was woken with someone moving the hair on the back of my head. I turned and it was Buddy.

Me: *Buddy, What are you doing?*

Buddy: *Oh Nana, I wanted to see your back eyes, I can't find them!*

One of my favorite memories is when Buddy was five years old. I had just had surgery repairing my shoulder, then my Mom passed on. One morning laying in bed feeling sad, I heard Buddy singing in his bedroom, "In the morning when I rise, in the morning when I rise, In the morning when I rise give me Jesus..." He put a smile on my face, I called him in and both him and his sister ran in where we all sang it together.

Submitted By: Sandra Best

Our two boys have struggled throughout this process. We have one boy adopted and are waiting for the date for our second one, both being our grandsons.

We would like to shout out a great big thank you to all the respite providers who open their house to these children.

Deborah and Ted Marlowe are great people, and we can always count on our boys having a wonderful time while in their care, providing a recharge for us.

Chris and Victoria St. Louis have provided great memories for our boys also. Both couples go above and beyond when taking these children in their homes, while providing respite for us. A big hooray for people helping the caregivers have a break!

We love you and so do our boys!

Submitted By: Bob and Flora Joyal



For Olivia's 8th birthday instead of getting gifts she decided to give gifts!
This thoughtful kind girl raised \$300.00 for youth in care.
Thank you Olivia!

AFFM is looking for "Feel Good Stories" to be featured in the next upcoming newsletter!

Do you know someone who has done something kind for another? Did you read something that made you smile? Did your child say or do something that made you laugh out loud? Email your stories to meagan@affm.net and help AFFM spread some happiness!

AFFM Statewide Support Groups



At times meetings are cancelled due to weather and other unforeseen circumstances, cancellation notices are sent out via AFFM 's 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 @ 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 PG= Permanency Guardianship CC= Childcare

Auburn— A/F/K/CC: 4th Tuesday of the month from 6:00 – 8:00 pm at Opportunity Enterprises, *use the back door* (400 Center St. Auburn)

Augusta— Kinship only/CC: 3rd Wednesday of the month from 5:30 – 8:00 pm at the Augusta Elks Lodge (397 Civic Center Dr.) call Jan Partridge at 207-495-3864. A potluck is provided at this group.

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

Augusta-- A/PG/CC: 2nd Friday of the month from 6:00-7:30 pm at the Buker Community Center (22 Armory Street).

Bangor— A/PG/CC: 2nd Tuesday of the month from 6:00-7:30 PM at the Redeemer Lutheran Church (540 Essex Street).

Belfast— A/F/K/CC: 2nd Monday of the month from 5:30-7:00pm at Christ The King Church Room 330 (9 Field Street).

Biddeford— Kinship only/CC: 3rd Tuesday of the month from 10:00–Noon at J Richard Martin Community Center (189 Alfred Street).

Bridgton— A/F/K/CC: 3rd Monday of the month from 6:30 – 8:30 pm at the Community Center (Behind Reny's) (15 Depot St)

Brunswick— A/F/K/CC: 4th Tuesday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30pm at St Paul's Episcopal Church (27 Pleasant St).

Caribou—A/F/K: 4th Monday of the month from 10:00am-noon at Caribou CHCS, 7 Hatch Drive #120. No RSVP needed.

Damariscotta— A/F/K: 1st Thursday of the month from 5:30-7:00 PM at the Lincoln County Assembly of God Church (672 Main Street).

Dover-Foxcroft— A/F/K/CC: 2nd Thursday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm at Mayo Regional Hospital, Borestone & Sebec conference room (897 W Main Street).

Ellsworth— A/F/K/CC: 3rd Tuesday of the month from 5:30 – 7:30 pm at Moore Community Center (133 State St.)

Farmington— A/F/K/CC: every 3rd Tuesday of the month from 6 – 7:30 pm at the Gwilym R. Roberts Learning Center (by the administration office), UMF rooms 001 and 003

Houlton— A/F/K: 3rd Monday of the month from 10:00am – noon at Houlton CHCS, 2 Water Street. No RSVP needed.

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

Machias— A/F/K/CC: 3rd Thursday of the month from 5:30 – 7:00PM @ University of Maine Machias Torrey Hall Rooms 230 & 234 (116 Obrien Ave).

Orono— A/F/K/CC: 3rd Monday of the month from 6:00-7:30pm at the Orono United Methodist Church (36 Oak Street).

Presque Isle— A/F/K/CC: 3rd Tuesday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm at the Wesleyan Church (387 Centerline Road).

Rockland—A/F/K/CC: 1st Wednesday of the month from 5:00PM-6:30PM @ Grace Bible Fellowship (30 Sherer Lane).

Richmond— A/F/K/CC: 4th Tuesday of the month from 5:30PM-7:00PM at Isaac F. Umberhine Public Library (86 Main St.)

Rumford— A/F/K/CC: 3rd Thursday of the month from 6-7:30PM at the Rumford Public Library (56 Rumford Ave.)

Sanford— A/F/K/CC: 3rd Wednesday of the month from 6:00PM-8PM at Curtis Lake Church (38 Westview Drive)

Scarborough— Kinship Only: 4th Wednesday of the month from 1:00PM-2:00PM at SMAA (136 US Rte 1)

Skowhegan— A/F/K/CC: 2nd Thursday of the month from 6:00-7:30pm at the Federate Church in the Sunday school and nursery rooms (13 Island Ave.)

South Portland— A/F/K/CC: 2nd Tuesday of the month from 6:00-7:30pm at Eastpoint Church (345 Clarks Pond Pkwy).

Wells— A/F/K/CC: 4th Tuesday of the month from 6:00-7:30pm at Wells Congregational Church (1695 Post Road).

Windham—A/PG/CC: 4th Thursday of the month from 6-7:30pm at the Windham Assembly of God (1050 Roosevelt Trail).

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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! Below are all the ways you can connect with AFFM and learn more about services offered.

Locations: 34 Main Street, Orono, Maine

333 Lincoln Street, Saco, Maine

Phone: 207-827-2331

Email: info@affm.net

Website: www.affm.net

Like us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Adoptive-and-Foster-Families-of-Maine-Inc/>

[Save a tree, sign up for the E-Newsletter!](#)