

Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

Volume 23

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January 2020

AFFM's mission is to provide the training, guidance, knowledge and resources needed to handle the complex issues encountered by resource families as they open their hearts and homes to children in need.

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc. (AFFM) provides support services for adoptive, foster and kinship families. This includes kinship families in the informal system (not working in conjunction with DHHS).

Child welfare is dependent upon a myriad of state and federal laws, rules and regulations. Decisions concerning families and innocent children are rarely easy, and are usually fraught with highly emotional issues. AFFM is dedicated to assisting families to help children find the security they deserve. AFFM understands every situation in fostering, adoption and kinship care is unique and families will face challenges. AFFM strives to continue to be a resource for families and is available 24/7.

AFFM believes that Maine's children have the right to be a member of a healthy, safe and stable family.

AFFM believes that all adoptive, foster and kinship families deserve to have unconditional support to help build on their strengths and to provide the best quality home environment possible.



AFFM believes that access to services to enhance families abilities and develop new skills is imperative.

AFFM believes all families who open their homes to Maine's children deserve unbiased support.

Save the Date:
AFFM's 23rd Annual Spring
Training Conference!

Friday April 17th and Saturday April 18th
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
363 Maine Mall Road
Portland, ME

Keynote Speaker:
Jim Harris, Ed.D., MSW



ocshelps.com

Conference brochure and registration
coming soon!

Learn more about the support services AFFM offers by calling 207-827-2331 or visit www.affm.net

Thank You!

As always, the month of December went by in a blur for AFFM! Between the day to day operations of both offices, planning and hosting holiday parties, and collecting and distributing gifts for over 1,000 kids, there was little time to do much else. AFFM, of course, could not do this alone and we are so unbelievably thankful for the incredible support from businesses and individuals who donate their time and efforts!

It's so heartwarming to see our community come together to help others. These are the people that define the meaning of the holidays! AFFM is so grateful for the love and support that each and every one of you has given and continues to give. We wish nothing but the best to you and your families as we move forward in the New Year!

Ogunquit Spirit of Giving

WPOR Portland Radio Group

Eastpoint Christian Church

Ukuleles Heal the World

Panera Bread, Biddeford

Dunkin' Donuts, Gorham Rd.

Nubble Books

Christmas Tree Shops, Scarborough

Target, Biddeford

Poland Spring

Lindt Chocolate

Nate and Sandra Snow

Seashore Trolley Museum– Katie Orlando

Aunt Heidi Bowden & Family

Ed's Grove

Hannaford, Biddeford

Bill and Karen Labombarde

Lord's Clambox

Applebee's, Sanford

Subway, Sanford

The Chilean

Five Alarm Diner

Mel's Raspberry Patch

Domino's, Sanford

Bowl-A-Rama

Long Horn Steak House, Biddeford

Robin's Confections

Pizza Hut, Sanford

Norway Savings Bank

Haley's Metal Shop

Ron Redman from A-Copi

Thank You Continued (Because there were SO many incredible people to recognize!)

Tyler Technologies

Bangor International Airport

Morgan Stanley

Toys for Tots

Lots of Tots Daycare in Princeton

Cambridge Baptist Church

The Neighborhood Early learning Center

Bangor Federal Credit Union

The Cubby Thrift Store

Moe's BBQ

The Ramada Inn, Bangor

Cindy Paine

Jan Lennon

Smitty's Cinema– Christine Patnaude

Project Glimmer

Joseph & Amanda Liguori

Jenifer Damon

Williston-Immanuel Church

Sarah Oliver and Family

Mila Playsic

Michael & Donna Whalen

Geishaker Family

Alison Nolan

Patrons Oxford Insurance– Bethany Morrison

Morgan Royle

St. Charles Borromeo Church

Scentsy Buddies-Bethany Charron

Ava Smart

Lularoe– Bonnie Waterman

Lush

Lamey-Wellehan Shoes– Don Stowell

Tammy Cutchen

Meghan Painton

Linda Ford

FASD Maine Creates Community For Foster Parents, Families and Individuals Affected by Fetal Alcohol

Responding to a need for information, community and support, last fall some adoptive parents, caregivers and family members started a grassroots group, FASD Maine. All members of the AFFM community are invited to join.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders — FASDs — can occur in any person whose birth mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. FASD can include physical problems such as central nervous system damage that results in sensory issues, and problems with learning, memory, behavior, and understanding social cues. Many children and adults with FASD have trouble regulating emotions such as anxiety, anger or frustration.

FASD and The Foster Care System

Recent studies indicate that in the general population, the prevalence rate for FASD is 2-5 percent. Separate research shows that children in foster care exposed to alcohol in utero may be 10-15 times that number (1, 2).

Yet children in the foster system or adopted children face special challenges getting diagnosed. Many doctors will diagnose fetal alcohol only if the birth mother confirms drinking while pregnant. This confirmation can be hard to get.

Some women will not admit drinking from reasons of fear, stigma or addiction. Many women did not realize they were pregnant when they drank. Some children available for adoption or in the foster system have incomplete pre-natal histories for a variety of reasons.

Overlapping Diagnoses

In Maine, few doctors list fetal alcohol as an area of expertise. Many children accumulate diagnoses with overlapping characteristics such as ADHD, RAD (reactive attachment disorder), ODD (oppositional defiant disorder), trauma and autism. As explained in Diane Malbin's important book Trying Differently Rather Than Harder, these diagnoses aren't necessarily incorrect, but they do not reflect the full picture or the causes for behaviors, or how best to help the child or young adult affected by pre-natal alcohol exposure.

In addition, current research suggests that only about ten percent of people with FASD have visible facial features associated with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), which is just one of the diagnoses on the fetal alcohol spectrum.

With the right education and supports, many FASD-affected children grow up to be happy, contributing members of families and communities. However, without the right parenting, school accommodations, understanding and supports, other individuals with FASD can experience secondary disabilities such as mental health issues, school disruption, criminal justice involvement, unemployment, and homelessness.

FASD Maine is planning caregiver and parent education in March. If you are interested in learning more, please join FASD Maine's Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/463838167530594/>

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Information used in this article comes from Trying Differently Rather Than Harder by Diane Malbin; Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder by Rodger and Gowsell; training provided by FAFASD; and the lived experience of adoptive, foster and birth parents who have generously shared what they have learned. These books are available from the AFFM lending library, compliments of FASD Maine.

Foster prevalence sources (citations 1 and 2):

*Astley SJ. Fetal alcohol syndrome prevention in Washington State: Evidence of success. Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology, 2004; 18:344-351.
J Pediatr. 2002 Nov;141(5):712-7.*

*Application of the fetal alcohol syndrome facial photographic screening tool in a foster care population.
Astley SJ1, Stachowiak J, Clarren SK, Clausen C.*



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Would You Like to Contribute an Article to the Family Ties Newsletter?

AFFM would love to hear from you! Do you have an upcoming event or activity that you'd like to share? Are you a professional that is interested in sharing information pertaining to the child welfare system? Please send all submissions to meagan@affm.net and you may be featured in an upcoming newsletter!

Kinship Corner

If you are (or once were) a grandparent or other older relative raising children, or if your organization provides support for those who are, the Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren needs your help to identify:

Best practices, resources, and other useful information for grandparents and other older relatives raising children

Gaps in available resources

Unique needs of children affected by opioid misuse

Unique needs of members of Native American tribes.

This information will be used to plan the Council's future activities and ultimately will be included in a report to Congress, which also will be shared publicly.

To provide your input, **please complete the form at <https://acl.gov/form/sgrg-form>** no later than 11:59 p.m. EST on **Friday, February 7, 2020.**

Your name and email address are required, but you may provide input on as many or as few of the remaining topics as you wish. (Please do NOT include personally identifiable information such as names of anyone other than yourself or addresses, phone numbers or Social Security numbers of any individual. Submissions that include such information will be deleted without review.)

AFFM is excited to have Bette Hoxie represent Maine on the Advisory Council. Bette is optimistic the information provided will help relative caregivers understand the significance of the council's work.

AFFM's Facebook Swap Group

Are you in need of material goods? Do you have Facebook? AFFM has created a Closed Facebook Swap Group!

This SWAP ONLY GROUP is a place for families to communicate available and needed resources. This will allow for more immediate access to resources needed by families living in the same geographic location. AFFM recognizes that families have needs outside of the normal office hours and hoping this will facilitate those needs.

This is strictly for resources that AFFM would accept as donations at the office to provide to other families.

AFFM will monitor this Closed Group and ensure there will be no selling of resources and all members MUST be approved by AFFM Admin.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/affmswap/>

AFFM will also continue to send notices out via list serve for requested resources as needed. It is our hope, with these avenues your needs are being met more frequently and you feel more prepared when you are opening your homes to children in need.



Feel Good Stories!

My feel-good story is how thankful I am that with several sources contributing, my great, great niece, who is placed here in kinship care had a wonderful, fun-filled Christmas. She got an amazingly generous amount of gifts from her AFFM sponsor, the \$50 from DHHS, a gift from her caseworker. Add all of that to small gifts from family, she got literally everything she wished for. Her big gift was obtained through AFFM, and was the same exact notepad as her cousins got. Thanks to all who contribute to these kids and help those of us trying to adjust our home and lifestyle to accommodate children who likely have “issues” due to circumstances. I’m positive I’m not the only one on a very limited fixed income. Best wishes and abundant patience for one and all!

Submitted By: Sarah Jones

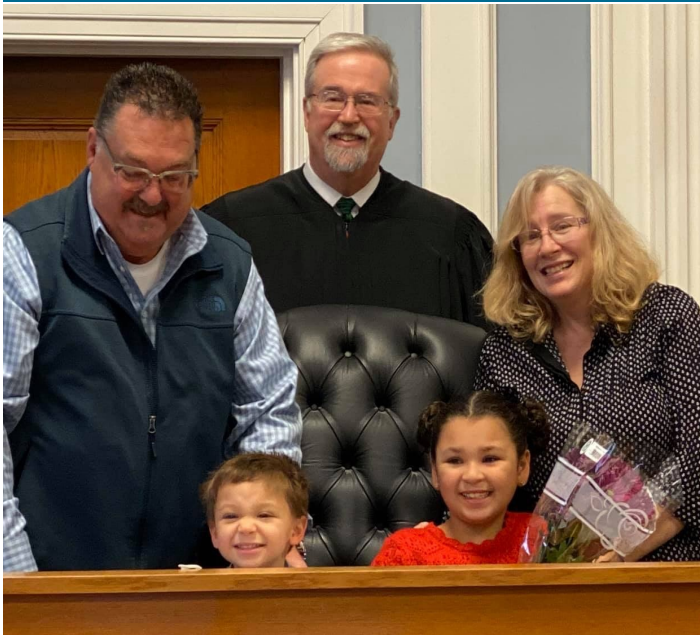


My name is Debi and my husband is Ken, we adopted our granddaughter Summer. She’s 26 months old. She makes me laugh everyday. She likes doing little crafts. She is so amazing how she comes up with new words and understands more than I ever could imagine. Every morning she wakes up and says good morning with a big smile to all of us. You can’t help but smile back. She is keeping me young! She loves her dance class. And she welcomes everyone at the library. No matter where we go she just says hi to everyone. I couldn’t imagine our lives without her! I want to say thanks to our case workers for making it possible to have her in our lives even thou we are older.

Submitted By: Debi Muse

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!

Adoption Announcements!



Vicki and John Cunningham are excited to announce the adoption of their two littles, Jazzmin and Maliek Cunningham! Jazz was in care from the time she was 2 1/2 years old until December 7th and she is now 7. Maliek is her biological brother that was in care from 7 weeks until December 7th and he is 3 1/2 now. We are all so blessed we’ve had them for almost four years in our home!

Congratulations!



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!

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 6:00 – 7:30 pm @ University of Maine Machias Torrey Hall Rooms 228 & 230 (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 5:30PM-7:00PM @ 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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Affiliated With:
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National Foster Parent Association
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! Below are all the ways you can connect with AFFM and learn more about services offered.

Locations: 304 Hancock Street Suite 2A, Bangor, 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!