

# Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

Volume 23

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April 2020

*Dear Resource Families and Community Partners,*

*Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine Inc. & The Kinship Program (AFFM) recognizes that we are in uncertain times however we will continue to navigate how to best support families remotely. The newsletter will be a consistent bi-monthly resource available electronically and a mailed hardcopy. AFFM will continue to do our best to share the most up to date information pertinent to you and the children in your home.*

*Sadly, as most are aware, AFFM had to make the difficult decision to cancel the annual spring conference scheduled for April 17th & 18th 2020 in Portland. This will be the first time in 23 years the event will not be held. AFFM understands that many of those who attend the conference count on receiving much-needed information and training hours to renew their foster care license. Knowing this, AFFM has worked hard to provide training and C.A.R.E.S. meetings online for families as a way to continue education for relicensing hours and provide the continued support. **Training information and C.A.R.E.S. meeting dates are listed within the newsletter.***

*As a friendly reminder, AFFM will not be accepting donated tangible material goods at either office through the months of April and May. Please utilize AFFM's Facebook Swap page if you find yourself with an immediate need or call the office at 207-827-2331, as we are still able to receive calls or email [info@affm.net](mailto:info@affm.net) and we'll try our best to fill the need.*

**For the most up to date information on services and supports offered follow AFFM on Facebook:**

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

**Join AFFM's email list serv: <https://www.affm.net/affms-mailing-list-subscription/>**

*As always, AFFM would like to extended our deepest gratitude as you continue to keep Maine's youth in care and your families safe and healthy.*

*Sincerely,*

*Your dedicated AFFM Staff*



# Helpful Resources/Updates

*If you receive a hardcopy of the newsletter and do not have access to the internet, please call AFFM at 827-2331 to receive a printout of the linked materials*

Maine's Department of Health and Human Services Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), has put a temporary hold on in person visitation during the Maine Governor's Stay At Home Order. OCFS is asking resource families to hold virtual visitation using programs such as Zoom and Google Duo. AFFM has compiled recommendations on how to support a successful and engaging virtual visit; from a brief Zoom tutorial (including screen sharing) and Google Duo tutorial, to interactive links parent and child(ren) can use during visit time, to book resources for virtual story time, to OCFS links outlining visit expectations and required documents for Resource Family supervised visits. **Link:** [How to Support an Engaging Virtual Visit](#)

*For the most up to date information regarding COVID-19 visit [OCFS webpage](#) and sign up for OCFS list serv.*

*Are you and your kids feeling a bit stir crazy? AFFM has created a list of activities to do with your children while practicing social distancing. Click the link for ideas: [Social Distancing with Kids](#)*

## **RESOURCES FOR INTERNET ACCESS**

**Xfinity:** In response to COVID-19 developments, some internet providers are offering free services to low-income families and households with students. Comcast Xfinity is currently offering its [Internet Essentials](#) program free for two months to new customers. Internet essentials is an effort to get affordable internet (\$10/month) to those without and/or low income households. Many of the families we work with are eligible given they qualify for assistance programs such as SNAP and Medicaid. <https://www.internetessentials.com/apply>. The internet provider is also automatically increasing speeds for all Internet Essentials customers. For internet services, Xfinity WiFi hotspots are free nationwide for anyone who needs them – including non-Xfinity Internet subscribers. Once near a hotspot, consumers should select the “xfinitywifi” network name in the list of available hotspots and then launch a browser. [Click here to view the Xfinity WiFi Hotspot map.](#)

**Free internet for students from Charter Spectrum:** Households with students K–12 or university students can sign up for a new Charter Spectrum internet account to get the first two months of internet with speeds up to 100 Mbps for free. Installation fees will be waived for those who qualify for the offer. Call 1-844-488-8395 to enroll. Spectrum Wi-Fi hotspots are also currently open and free to use.

**Free internet for students from Altice:** Altice internet providers Suddenlink and Optimum are offering 60 days of free internet service for households with K–12 or college students. Internet speeds are up to 30 Mbps if you do not already have access to a home internet plan. To sign up, call 1-866-200-9522 if you live in an area with Optimum internet service, or call 1-888-633-0030 if you live in an area with Suddenlink internet service.

**Free low-income internet from Cox:** Until May 12, 2020, Cox is offering the first month of its low-income internet program, [Connect2Compete](#), for free. The internet service is also providing free phone and remote desktop support for technical support during that time.

For more information on internet options - [www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/are-there-government-programs-to-help-me-get-internet-service](http://www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/are-there-government-programs-to-help-me-get-internet-service)

*The link below highlights free online training offered from outside organizations along with training put on by AFFM. This list will be updated often, so check back. If you know of any training being offered that you feel should be added, please email [monica@affm.net](mailto:monica@affm.net)*

*To view training offered by AFFM and other free online training, visit [www.affm.net/services/training/](http://www.affm.net/services/training/)*



# April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

*AFFM knows this is a stressful time for all and the uncertainty of when things will go back to normal can be overwhelming. As April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, AFFM would like to share some helpful resources to help you manage stress and anxiety that may arise during this time.*

*Telehealth has become the “new” way of communicating with healthcare professionals. Dirigo Counseling Clinic is offering a free clinic via Telehealth. Families can call the office at 973-0505 or 1-877-656-5132 and let Dirigo staff know they are interested in the free clinic.*

*If families or individuals have MaineCare or any other insurance, they are not eligible for the free clinic. Families can still call Dirigo and have appointments via Telehealth, but their insurance would be billed.*

*Please check with your healthcare provider to see if Telehealth is offered.*

*Other helpful resources and tip sheets can be found at the [National Child Abuse Prevention Month](#) website or the [CDC](#) website.*



## Thank you Mary Lake!



Mary is a special part of the AFFM family. Her generous spirit knows no bounds. Mary stitches each beautiful dress, shoulder bag, and quilt with love by using her grandmother's antique treadle sewing machine. Her kindness and devotion is appreciated by all the foster, adoptive, and kinship families who have received and cherished her creations over the years.

*“It’s not how much you do, but how much love you put into the doing that matters.” - Mother Theresa*

## New Business Added to the Discount Card Program!

**The Suite Salon**  
14 Millett Dr.  
Auburn Me 04210  
207-400-5156  
15% off services  
with Breanna ONLY

<https://the-suite-by-tbb-salon.business.site/>



# Kinship



# Corner

## *COVID-19 and Kinship Care*

*Meagan asked me to share a little personal story of kinship caregiving during this unprecedented time in our history.*

As many know, in addition to providing support, guidance, education and material goods through AFFM as a Kinship Support Specialist, I am also walking the walk.

I have two grandchildren from two different sets of parent for whom I am the kinship provider. When the shelter in place order began, I had to learn to manage how to empathize with the parents who's visits are quite limited.

It is always a balancing act to be both the Mom and the kinship provider. The little ones have no voice so it is imperative that I put their needs first. It becomes more complicated when during a pandemic one of the parents is homeless and constantly at risk. That parent under different circumstances would be welcome to share my home but with the need to safe guard the child and go by licensing regulations that is not an option. Hence a fearful time for this Mom. One of the children's grandparent's died in the midst of this. My heart goes out to that parent and yet I cannot be near so that parent essentially grieves alone.

I am blessed to have a full time job and to be able to work from home. To be honest, I do not always consider working from home as a blessing. I sometimes feel torn in several directions with the demands of little ones and the time needed to attend to meals, laundry, keeping house reasonably sanitary, outside play etc. while keeping on top of the demands of my job. But it is better than the alternative that many struggle with due to lay- offs and the loss of income.

Getting the food and keeping safe is an issue! On a brighter note, I had just begun to write this and was wondering if I had enough milk and bread to get by until, my grandson could shop. A knock came at the front door. I peeked through the window of the door and discovered a stranger standing there. I opened the door enough to keep her a socially safe distance away. She spoke to me in broken English. She asked if the black haired lady with a baby lived here? She was looking for my daughter, Jennifer. She told me she lives nearby and had seen Jenn walk with my grandson many times. She has school aged children and the school had dropped off two large bags of food to her home. She had plenty at this time so shared the bags with Jenn. Two gallons of milk, several sandwiches, fruit, vegetables, cereal and on and on! How was that for timing? We are blessed!

My sons have taken this time to replace the shingles on the roof of our home. Another blessing! If they were at work it could not get done. The work also helps to fill the time they would typically spend with friends.

My four- year -old grandson has made it clear I am not a teacher. He is however, beginning to accept that his school is closed and doing papers with Gramma is the new norm.

All in all, a bit of a trying time but this too shall pass.

I wish all the kinship caregivers the best. If I can help, I am a phone call away. Just keep in mind that there may be small and sometimes loud voices in the background! Above all else stay safe!

*Bette Hoxie, Kinship Supervisor AFFM's Bangor Office*

***For more helpful information around COVID-19, Generations United compiled [a list of COVID-19 resources specific for grandfamilies](#) that addresses:***

- *Grandfamily support programs*
- *Access to free or reduced meals from schools or other home delivery services*
- *Access to free or discounted internet*
- *Medication delivery*
- *Resources for talking to children about corona virus*
- *Resources for managing stress, anxiety, and back up planning*
- *Access to frequently asked questions [related to children, older adults and those at higher risk](#)*



# Feel Good Stories!

***Each hour of everyday we receive new information about Covid-19 and how it is impacting the world. More than ever we are in need of some good news. We need to remember that though times are scary and uncertain, there is ALWAYS good in the world. AFFM hopes this “Feel Good” section brings a smile to your face. We’re all in this together and we will get through it together.***

“As is the case with so many children, my own daughter was saddened and disappointed to find out that we would have to cancel her birthday party this year. But thanks to a very sweet man in our community, we have started a “birthday parade” Facebook group. It is a private group, so as to guard the safety of the birthday kids. A bunch of fellow parents/grandparents/guardians line up our vehicles, most of them decorated, and at a scheduled date and time, we drive past the birthday child’s home, honking and waving to give them a special memory on what should be a happy day, not a sad day. It’s a way to make sure our kids know that their birthday is special and is important. My daughter’s parade was on Tuesday, and she was so happy and so excited to see so many people come out to make sure that her birthday was celebrated!

This is an idea that can be implemented in any community, if someone is willing to put in the time and effort. These are unprecedented times, but kids shouldn’t have to feel disappointed because of it, when they should be happy.”

Submitted By: Bonnie Goodson



My 15-month-old kiddo melts my heart. He is so very jealous of anyone who comes near me. When one of my girls hugs me and says, "my mamma", he comes as fast as he can, and I must pick him up. Then he pushes them away by the face, hugs me with his head on my shoulder and says "OH MY MAMMA" he keeps doing that until the girls walk away. It just melts my heart and makes me feel all warm inside. Less than 5 minutes later, he is doing his rounds hugging and giving his "sisters" kisses. All is well and full of love here at Mamma’s house.

Submitted By: Deborah Testa

On March 6th a 17-year-old intellectually disabled young man moved into my home. A week later I fell in the woods trying to retrieve our cat. I couldn’t get up and was in pain. (My hip had been broken last July and was not 100% completely healed.) I screamed for him as he was inside. He came out and was asked to secure the three pets inside and retrieve the cell phone. He brought the cell phone out and asked if he should call 911. I said yes and he accomplished the task. Fire and rescue came, I was taken to the hospital, (I was ok), and he enjoyed a ride in the front seat of the fire truck for the first time in his life. He said he was glad He could call 911 because he got to ride in the fire-truck! Oh! And he’s glad I didn’t get hurt!

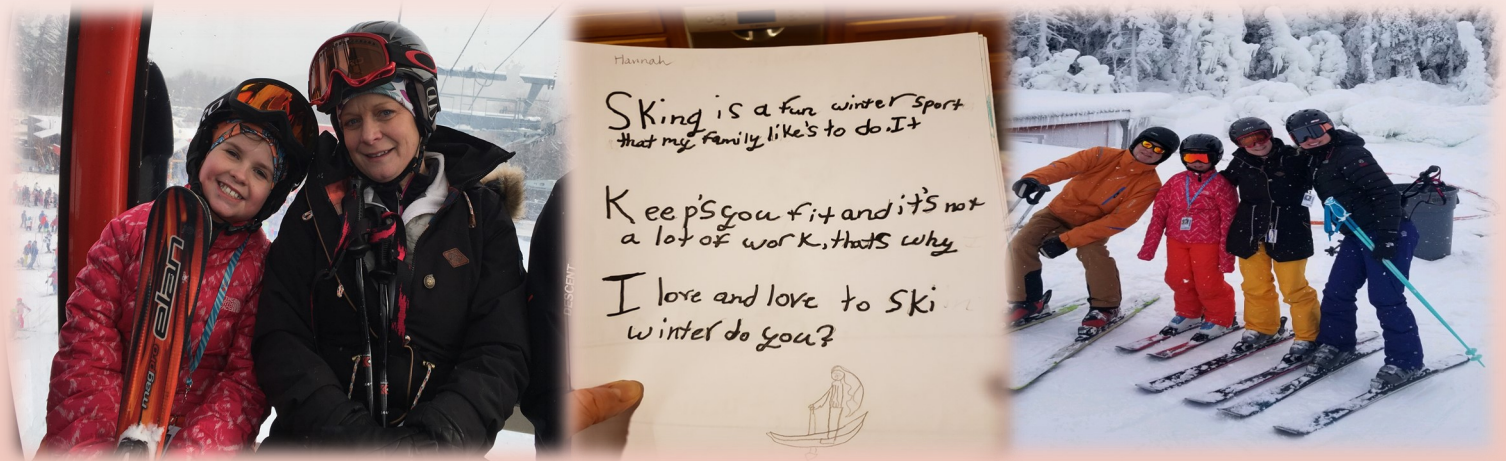
Submitted By: Karyn Williams

## More Feel Good Stories!

Christmas 2019 was a very special time. Every year since living in the farmhouse I have taken the end cut from each Christmas tree, dated it and hung it on a basement beam. This year Hannah wanted to have the honor of dating and hanging the end cut. She wrote the year, made 2 hearts and added, "H + S = Happy". Meaning: Hannah & Susan = Happy!



This is also from the same holiday vacation time. Hannah wrote on her first day back to school, *"Skiing is a fun winter sport that my family likes to do. It keeps you fit and it's not a lot of work, that's why I love winter and love to ski, do you?"*



This is who she considers her extended family. In the center is Hannah and I flanked by my friends Lou on left and Aurelija on the right.

Submitted By: Susan Peters

**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](mailto:meagan@affm.net) and help AFFM spread some happiness!**



## AFFM Statewide Support Groups



### AFFM C.A.R.E.S. Meetings Now Offered Online During the Month of April!

*AFFM is aware if you receive the printed version of the newsletter some dates listed below may have passed. Please know the groups will continue to meet on a rotating schedule. Please email [Sheila@affm.net](mailto:Sheila@affm.net) or [hether@affm.net](mailto:hether@affm.net) if you have questions.*

*(C.A.R.E.S. Meetings will resume normal meeting dates and times after the social distancing order has been lifted.)*

Dial in from anywhere using your phone or computer. Connect with other adoptive, foster, and kinship families.

Receive support in how to handle complex situations. Share your expertise in an effort to help others.

Receive Information and support to help better understand DHHS rules/expectations.

Learn about programs and resources. Receive information on training and important topics.

**\*STATEWIDE C.A.R.E.S. MEETING: TUESDAY APRIL 14TH TIME: 1:00PM-2:00PM\***

### Southern Maine C.A.R.E.S. Meetings for April:

*Counties that have multiple groups scheduled throughout the month will have two options to sign on.*

**York County:** Wednesday April 15th Time: 6:30PM-8:00PM **OR** Tuesday April 28th Time: 10:00AM-11:30AM

**Cumberland/Sagadahoc County:** Monday April 20th Time: 1:00PM-2:30PM **OR** Thursday April 23rd Time: 7:00PM-8:30PM  
(For Permanency Guardianship/Adoptive families)

**Androscoggin County:** Tuesday April 28th Time: 7:00PM-8:30PM

**Oxford County:** Thursday April 16th Time: 7:00PM-8:30PM

**Franklin County:** Tuesday April 21st Time: 7:00PM-8:30PM

*Notices regarding C.A.R.E.S. Meetings are sent out via AFFM's email listserv. Please make sure you are signed up to receive emails from AFFM. RSVPs are required to obtain login information. Any questions or comments please email [hether@affm.net](mailto:hether@affm.net)*

### Northern Maine C.A.R.E.S. Meetings for April:

*Counties that have multiple groups scheduled throughout the month will have two options to sign on.*

**Aroostook County:** Tuesday April 21st Time: 3:00PM-4:30PM **and** April 30th Time: 6:00PM-7:30PM (Kinship only)

**Hancock County:** Wednesday April 22nd Time: 5:30PM-7:00PM

**Kennebec County:** Tuesday April 21st Time: 6:00PM-7:30PM (For Permanency Guardianship/Adoptive families)

**Lincoln/Knox County:** Wednesday April 8th Time: 5:00PM-6:30PM

**Penobscot County:** Tuesday April 14th Time: 6:00PM-7:30PM (For Permanency Guardianship/Adoptive families) **and** Monday April 20th Time: 6:00PM-7:30PM

**Piscataquis County:** Thursday April 9th Time: 6:00PM-7:30PM

**Somerset County:** Thursday April 9th Time: 7:45PM-9:00PM

**Washington County:** Thursday April 16th Time: 5:30PM-7:00PM **and** Thursday April 23rd Time: 6:00PM-7:30PM (Kinship Only)

*Notices regarding C.A.R.E.S. Meetings are sent out via AFFM's email listserv. Please make sure you are signed up to receive emails from AFFM. RSVPs are required to obtain login information. Any questions or comments please email [sheila@affm.net](mailto:sheila@affm.net)*

**Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.**  
304 Hancock Street Suite 2A, Bangor, ME 04401  
333 Lincoln Street, Saco, ME 04072

**Phone:**(207) 827-2331  
**Fax:** (207) 889-6978  
**On the Web:** [www.affm.net](http://www.affm.net)  
**E-Mail:** [info@affm.net](mailto:info@affm.net)

**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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**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, ME 04401  
333 Lincoln Street, Saco. Maine 04072

**Phone:** 207-827-2331

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

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

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