

Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

Volume 23

Number 9

September 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.

AFFM's New Guidelines for Donations:

AFFM continues to follow guidelines set in place by the CDC for the safety of our staff and families. As AFFM continues to work remotely, it is a challenge to accept, sort and organize donations. With that said, AFFM will begin accepting donations by appointment only so we can assure a staff member is available at our office. AFFM can accept up to two bags of items at this time as we do not have the capacity to sort and organize.

AFFM can accept the following items:

- ⇒ Kids clothing, boys & girls size infant to teen in good wearable condition
- ⇒ All sizes & gender of shoes in good wearable condition
- ⇒ Gently Used or New Winter clothing, jackets, snow pants, boots, hats, and mittens/gloves in good wearable condition
- ⇒ New Bedding

ALL Items Must Be Washed and Cleaned

Please take the time to wash and thoughtfully sort through your donations, otherwise we will not be able to accept them. PLEASE NO faded, piling, torn, stained or inappropriate clothing. Thank you for all the lovingly sorted and washed donations you bring to us, we do our best to make sure they reach children in care.

Please Do Not Leave Donations Outside the Office

Please Call and Make an Appointment for Donation Drop Off

For the most up to date information on services and supports offered follow AFFM on Facebook and join AFFM's email list serv: www.affm.net

Maine Department of Health & Human Services

Maine OCFS Foster Care Update - School Reopening Plans

Dear Resource Parents,

We are writing to provide guidance regarding children in foster care and education plans for the 2020-2021 school year.

Individual School district plans, in response to Covid-19, have yet to be finalized in many school districts. Most children will benefit from being in a structured school setting, especially children who require Individual Education Plans (IEP) and those children who have experienced trauma.

We recognize that every situation is different, and Resource Parents need to be consulted with and have input in developing educational plans for the children in your home. According to American Academy of Pediatrics schools are fundamental to child and adolescent development and well-being and provide our children and adolescents with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/speech and mental health therapy, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits. We ask that when possible, children in care attend school the maximum time offered provided by the school district; however, we recognize that each child and resource home has individualized needs. We support making a plan that meets the needs of both.

School/Education plans for each child in care will be developed with the resource parents in consultation with the caseworker, parents and Tribal representation in ICWA cases taking into account the:

- Consideration of the wishes of the resource parents
- Consideration of the wishes of the parents
- Needs and wishes of the youth (when appropriate)
- Recommendations of the Tribe
- COVID plans
- Resource family's health needs
- Child care
- Supervision
- Educational support
- Child's health and educational needs

Immunization requirements (catchup clinics are available throughout the state)

Sincerely,

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW
Associate Director of Child Welfare Services
Office of Child and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services

Meet the New Staff of AFFM!

Jessica Richards, Kinship Specialist. Jessica will be working with kinship families directly in District 3 (Franklin, Oxford, and Androscoggin county). Jessica is available to identify the resources, supports, and services needed for kinship families and work collaboratively with other organizations to meet those needs. AFFM is excited to have Jessica on board! (Email: jessica@affm.net)

Mindy Kane, Kinship Specialist. Mindy will be working with kinship families directly in District 7 & 8 (Hancock, Washington, and Aroostook county). Mindy will provide similar services to Jessica for kinship families. AFFM is happy to have Mindy as a member of our team! (Email: mindy@affm.net)

Sarah Hatt, Resource Family Specialist. Sarah will provide services to families in District 7 & 8 (Hancock, Washington, and Aroostook county). Sarah may be one of the friendly voices you hear on the phone! Sarah will answer warm line calls and assess the appropriate service/assistance required to meet the various needs of resource families. AFFM is thrilled to have Sarah supporting families in the county! (Email: sarah@affm.net)

Penni Theriault, Community Kinship Specialist. Penni will work closely with school personnel in District 7 to establish a strong working relationship within the schools as well as a support group. Penni will provide empathetic listening support and help families navigate services for kinship caregivers. AFFM is delighted to have Penni on our team and to collaborate within the school systems!

Thank You!



AFFM was grateful to be able to hold a small gathering on Friday July 31st at Mantle Lake Park in Presque Isle. Thank you to the following individuals and businesses that helped make this family fun event possible:

*Aroostook County Action Program
Bombshell Salon
Bradley's
Care & Comfort
Freedom Church
Presque Isle Fire Department
The Northern Lighthouse Inc.
Washburn Pentecostal Church*

Thank you to Staples in Bangor for contributing to AFFM's Back to School Program, Ready Set Go To Learn. This was a challenging year to fill all the requests received. The donation made by Staples helped immensely. Thank you again for all your support!



YLAT Needs Your Input!

The Youth Leadership Advisory Team is interested in hearing directly from young people about their experiences obtaining a driver's license and accessing OCFS resources for Driver's Ed. If you support a young person 15+ please consider having them fill out this brief survey. For more information or questions, contact Shannon Saxby, YLAT Coordinator at shannon.saxby@maine.edu or 207-776-2322.

Survey can be found here: <https://forms.gle/y9L6iq1be1KBBPox8>

New Discount in Oxford County!

Fryeburg Thrift Store

<https://www.fryeburgthrift.com/>

679 Main Street, Fryeburg
50% off even during sale events

Visit [Fryeburgthrift.com](https://www.fryeburgthrift.com/)
to make an appointment or Shop
SATURDAY 10-2



Feel Good Stories!

Bio Mom and Bonus (Adoptive) Mom. The most important word in that sentence is MOM. They are not "her" kids or "my" kids but "our" kids. We BOTH want what is best for them. We BOTH love them to the moon and back. We BOTH work hard to maintain a good and healthy relationship. Not because it is always easy, but because we know it is what is BEST for them. I am so unbelievably PROUD of this woman and what she has accomplished this past year. I am honored to have a place in her life and that she is willing to have a place in mine. I know it doesn't always work out this way, but I am so happy it has in our situation. Just look at those kids' smiles. How can it not be worth the effort?

Submitted By: Stephanie Moores



AFFM would like to send a huge thank you to Ian and Autumn Thayer who raised \$342.50 from a lemonade stand they had earlier in the summer. The pair wanted to donate to AFFM as Autumn said, "we want other kids to find a nice family like we did."

Submitted By: Vicky & Wayne Thayer



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!

Holiday Gift Giving Program!

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine and the Kinship Program is gearing up for the Holiday Gift Giving Program! Resource families are invited to add their children's names, gender, clothing size and age to a wish list for holiday gifts.

*Once again, the amazing people from the Ogunquit Spirit of Giving Committee will work to provide holiday presents to kids in AFFM programs. Give the office a call at 827-2331 and have your child's information and gift wish ready. We ask that you keep requests to under \$50.00 per child. The sooner AFFM has the information the more likely we are to fulfill the children's wishes. AFFM understands this year may be more difficult than others for families. **Requests will be filled to the best of our ability and our sponsors.***

AFFM will begin taking requests on Tuesday, September 8th until Friday, November 20th. Please mark your calendars with these dates.

Adoption Announcements!

Herb Dow and Renee Tash are thrilled to announce the adoption of their daughter Addy on May 20, 2020!



It is with great joy that we announce the adoption of Jane Rose Mary on April 17, 2020!

Her adoption via zoom brought some much needed excitement during the Covid quarantine! She has brought endless happiness and silliness into our home and we look forward to seeing all her future accomplishments.

We love you Jane!

Mom, Dad, Logan, J. Patrick, Ryan, Hope, Maeve, Cate, and Jack

XOXOXOXOXOXOXO



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!

Kinship



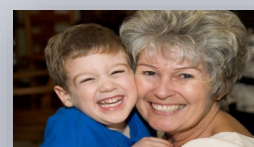
Corner

Celebrate Grandparents Day Sunday September 13th!

Keep an eye out on AFFM's listserv and Facebook page for a tentative celebration in honor of Grandparents Day.

AFFM knows this year has been challenging for a lot of families. Staying connected has especially been difficult! AFFM strives to continue to find new ways to support families and reduce any increased feelings of isolation. As plans for a celebration continues, here are just a few ways kinship families can connect with family members in the meantime:

- ♦ *If you are comfortable with technology, schedule a group chat, or use an interactive app and play games together!*
- ♦ *Send a letter or card to each other!*
- ♦ *Have a safe face to face visit while practicing social distancing! Bring a favorite meal to share or a unique present you created yourself!*



AFFM would like to thank the John T. Gorman Foundation for awarding them with the Direct Service Grant in 2019. The grant greatly assisted in providing emergency financial assistance to kinship families and allowed for AFFM to enhance the services provided to kinship families across the state of Maine. In 2019, The Kinship Program had many successes. Responses from a recent AFFM Satisfaction Survey indicated that 95% of the targeted population felt AFFM's support helped provide a safe and stable home for the children in their care.

Kinship families that received financial support through the Direct Service Grant, self-reported an average household annual income of \$17,616. Family sizes varied from 2 person households to 7 person households for a total of 192 people, 80 adults over the age of 21, and 112 children and young adults under the age of 21. Each family received on average \$290 in emergency financial assistance to help cover the cost of utility bills, heating, food insecurities, beds, and cribs. Of the 54 families that received financial assistance, 32 families were referred to a variety of supports including but not limited to the following: WIC, LIHEAP, SNAP, general assistance, housing vouchers, social security offices, DHHS offices, discount clothing and furniture thrift stores, food banks, cooperative extension food programs & community gardens. Upon AFFM's 30 day check-in with families, 23 of the 32 families that had been referred to other programs and support, reported that they had sought out the additional services that were recommended by AFFM.

The Kinship Program has since expanded with the hiring of additional staff and now has four full-time employees located regionally across the state to help kinship families navigate the various systems that they encounter when caring for a loved one's child.

If you or someone you know is a kinship provider, please feel free to reach out to one of our Kinship Specialist below.

Have a Question or Concern Related to Kinship Care? Reach Out to Your Local Kinship Specialist!

Kinship Supervisor Bette Hoxie bette@affm.net (District: 4, 5 & 6 Counties: Knox, Waldo, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Kennebec, Somerset, Penobscot, & Piscataquis)

Kinship Specialist Carey Pierson carey@affm.net (District: 1 & 2 Counties: York & Cumberland)

Kinship Specialist Jessica Richards jessica@affm.net (District: 3 Counties: Franklin, Oxford, & Androscoggin)

Kinship Specialist Mindy Kane mindy@affm.net (District: 7 & 8 Counties: Hancock, Washington, & Aroostook)



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

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 or brigid@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 SEPTEMBER 8TH TIME: 10:00AM-11:00AM

Southern Maine C.A.R.E.S. Meetings for September:

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

District 1 (York County): Wednesday September 16th 6:30PM-8PM and Tuesday September 29th 10:00AM-11:30AM

District 2 (Cumberland/Sagadahoc County): Tuesday September 1st 10-11:30AM, Tuesday September 8th 7:00PM-8:30PM, Thursday September 24th 10-11:30AM (*For Permanency Guardianship/Adoptive families*)

District 3 (Androscoggin/Franklin/Oxford County): Tuesday September 15th 10:00-11:30AM and Thursday September 17th 7:00-8:30PM

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 brigid@affm.net

Northern Maine C.A.R.E.S. Meetings for September:

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

District 4 (Knox/Lincoln/Waldo county): Wednesday September 9th 5:00-6:30PM

District 5 (Kennebec/Somerset county): Wednesday September 2nd 6-7:30PM

District 6 (Penobscot/Piscataquis county): Monday September 21st 6-7:30PM

District 7 (Hancock/Washington county): Wednesday September 23rd 5:30-7PM **Kinship Only: Thursday September 24th 6-7:30PM

District 8 (Aroostook county): Tuesday September 22nd 3-4:30PM **Kinship Only: Thursday September 17th 7:30-9PM

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

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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

FAMILY TIES THE NEWSLETTER OF ADOPTIVE & FOSTER FAMILIES OF MAINE, INC PUBLISHED WITH SUPPORT FROM THE MAINE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES. PLEASE DIRECT COMMENTS TO: EDITOR, FAMILY 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! 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

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!](#)