

# 28TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*'The Power of Meaningful Connections'*

## Keynote Speakers:



**Nicholas Tucker**  
Youth Camp Owner &  
Inspirational Speaker



**Dr. Amelia Franck Meyer**  
Executive Officer

*Registration is Now Open!*

April 11th & 12th 2025 

DoubleTree by Hilton, S. Portland, ME 



**REGISTER NOW**



**Adoptive & Foster  
Families of Maine, Inc.  
& The Kinship Program**

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

## Welcome To AFFM'S 28th Annual Spring Conference

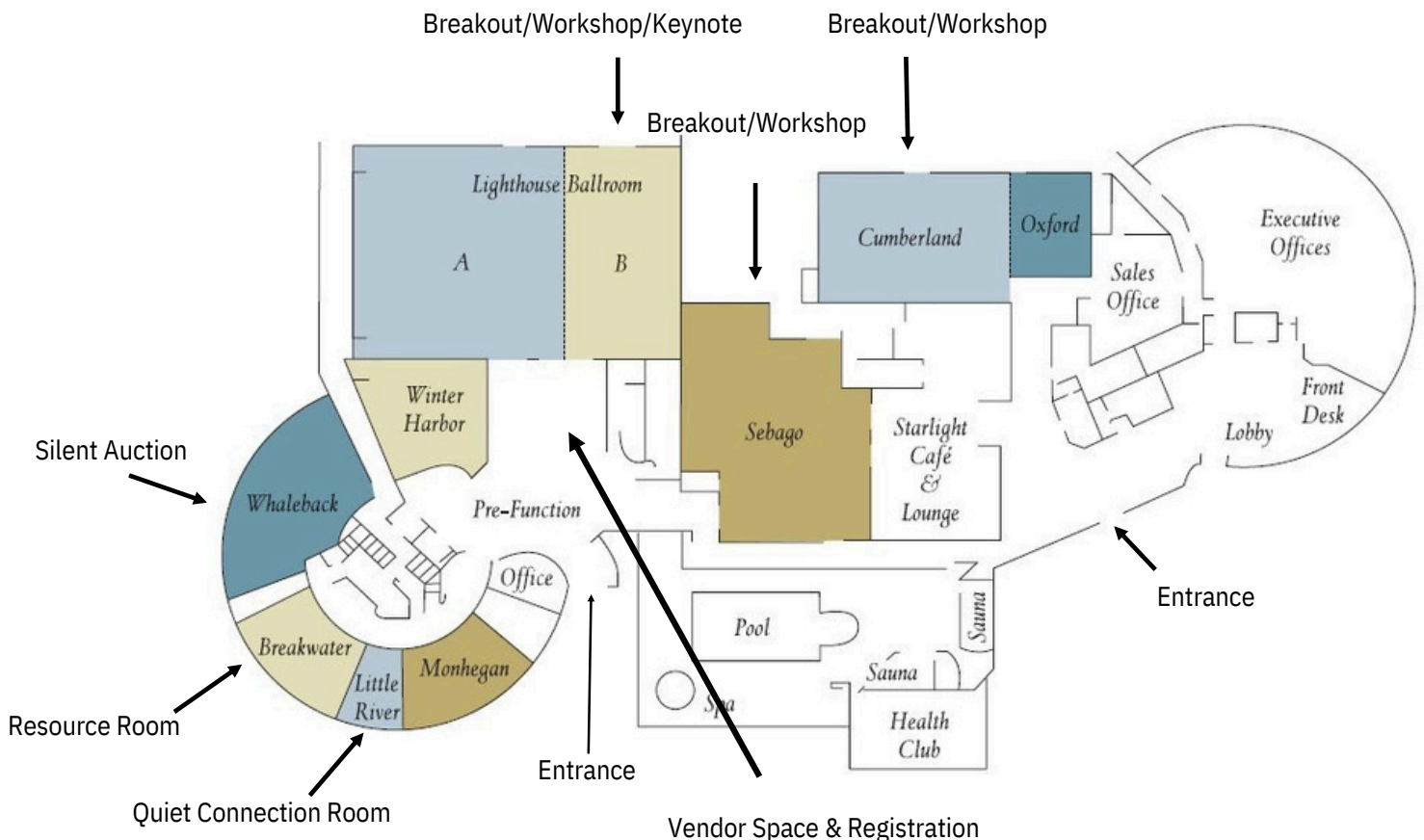
Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc. & the Kinship Program (AFFM) provides support services for adoptive, foster, and kinship families. AFFM's Mission is to provide the training, guidance, knowledge, and resources needed to handle complex issues encountered by resource families as they open their hearts and homes to children in need.

### Who Should Attend:

Kinship Providers, Foster Parents, Adoptive Parents, Social Workers, Child Welfare Workers, Clinicians, CASA Volunteers, Judges, Attorneys, Educators, and Other Child & Family Advocates.

### Why Attend

AFFM conferences offer specialized training tailored for families and professionals seeking unique and advanced learning opportunities. These events also provide a valuable chance to network and build connections with families and service providers from across the state, fostering collaboration and shared growth.



# Introducing the Keynote Speakers



**NICK TUCKER**

Youth Camp Owner &  
Inspirational Speaker

Nick is a father and a husband. He runs a youth adventure camp in the city of Los Angeles, and travels the country speaking to audiences on the importance of emotional health. In 2012, he finished an over 3000 mile journey on foot from the coast of Maine to sunny southern California. Nick uses his story of overcoming childhood trauma and self-destructive behavior to encourage others to choose a meaningful, productive path forward.

**Promote:** [nickrtucker.com](http://nickrtucker.com) IG:@nickrtucker



**DR. AMELLIA FRANCK MEYER**

Executive Officer

Dr. Amelia Franck Meyer, LISW is the Founder and CEO of the national nonprofit, Alia. Amelia and Team Alia are leading a nationally co-designed movement to keep children safe with, not from, their families.

Amelia and Team Alia believe that families are the solution (not the problem). Alia calls this new way of work an “UnSystem”. Team Alia believes that a key part of transformation is supporting families to safely raise their children. Working with innovative leaders, Amelia and Team Alia use best practices, evidence, and human centered design principles to operationalize concepts that produce rapid results and positive outcomes for youth and families. At Alia, Amelia also works to convene changemakers and partners to advance the tools and knowledge base in the field of child welfare. Amelia has co-authored and led the publication of a Social Return on Investment Study: The Unseen Costs of Foster Care; a Research Brief: Evidence Base for Avoiding Family Separation in Child Welfare Practice; Creating a Permanence Driven Organization: A Guidebook for Change in Child Welfare; and multiple reports on learnings and outcomes from the 14-county Alia UnSystem Innovation Cohort. Amelia was named one of People Magazine’s “25 Women Changing the World” in 2018, and in 2020, Amelia was also named by AARP MN and Pollen Midwest as a 50over50 Honoree—System Reformer in the Disruptor Category. Amelia has a widely viewed TEDx Talk on the Human Need for Belonging. Along with many awards from her alma maters, Amelia has also been honored as a Bush Fellow and an Ashoka Fellow.

## 8:30-9:00 A.M. Ballroom - **Welcome**

Travis Bryant, Executive Director Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine Inc., and The Kinship Program  
Bobbi Johnson, LMSW, Director Office of Child and Family Services

## 9:00-10:00 A.M. Ballroom - **Keynote: 'The Human Need For Belonging'**

*Presented by: Dr. Amelia Franck Meyer, Executive Officer*

To thrive and survive, children need to belong, to be claimed. Physical safety is essential, but it is not enough by itself. Humans come into the world physically tethered to another human being, and we need that connection to another human for our entire lives. Understanding the grief and loss, which results from experiencing childhood trauma, helps us to understand the current behaviors of children and youth through a new lens of compassion.

## 10:00-10:10 A.M. **Break**

## 10:10 -12:00 P.M. **Breakout Workshop**

### 1. Ballroom - 'Families are the Solution: Co-designing Changes Everything'

*Presented by: Dr. Amelia Franck Meyer, Executive Officer*

Every human has a need for belonging, safety and protection. Children thrive when their source of belonging is permanent; therefore, it is in a child's best interest to remain with a parent who can safely parent them. Some parents need support to be able to safely parent, and much of the support work for parents is on healing their intergenerational trauma, while they maintain bonds with their children. Learning what parents need and co-designing solutions with them helps to support and strengthen them.

### 2. Sebago - 'Bridging Hearts: Trauma-Informed Strategies for Supporting and Maintaining Family Connections in Foster Care and Adoption' *Presented in collaboration by the Catherine Cutler Institute Resource Family Introductory Training team including Cheri Crossman, LCSW, Bethany Arsenault, LMSW, Christina Kenney, MS Ed., and April Belyea, M.S. Ed., CAGS, from AFFM*

This interactive workshop focuses on building and nurturing meaningful connections between children and their families which is essential for promoting healing, a child's sense of identity, and long-term emotional wellbeing. It offers practical trauma-informed parenting strategies that help maintain and strengthen healthy family relationships and are designed to support the healing and growth of children while prioritizing their emotional safety and needs.

## 12:00-1:00 P.M. Ballroom - **Lunch**

### **Quiet Connection Room**

Step away from the busyness of the conference and find peace in our Quiet Connection Room, a dedicated space designed to help you decompress, process, and recharge.

This serene environment offers:

- Tranquil Atmosphere: Soft lighting, and minimal noise for a soothing retreat.
- Reflection Tools: Journals, pens, and mindfulness prompts are available to help you capture thoughts or reflect on what you've learned.

Whether you need a moment of solitude to process new information, reflect on key takeaways, or simply catch your breath, the Quiet Connection Room is here to support your well-being throughout the day. **Located in the Little River Conference Room.**

# Friday Afternoon

1:00-1:30 P.M. Lobby - **Networking & Resource Exploration**

1:30-3:30 P.M. **Breakout Workshop**

1. Ballroom - 'Building Your Toolkit for Healthy (Youth) Connections'

Presented by: Youth Leadership Advisory Team, Catherine Cutler Institute

Healthy connections are vital for young people's emotional, social, and psychological well-being—especially for those who have experienced trauma. Through interactive discussions, hands-on exercises, and a panel of current and former youth in care, participants will gain tools to support youth and create environments where every child feels seen, heard, and valued. Join the Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT) for an engaging workshop to explore:

- o The role of community and culture in fostering resilience.
- o How loss and disruption may manifest in behavioral challenges and how adults can respond effectively.
- o Strategies to build trust and nurture relationships with youth impacted by trauma.
- o Creating a "new normal" with supportive, empowering expectations for families.
- o Insights from a panel of current/former youth in care.

2. Cumberland- 'Partnering for Healthier Happier Outcomes: The Kinship Experience'

*Presented by: Bette Hoxie, AFFM Kinship Program Manager and Panel*

This workshop focuses on enhancing collaboration between kinship caregivers and key partners, including DHHS workers, licensing staff, court personnel, healthcare providers, and educators. Through a panel discussion with DHHS staff, participants will have the opportunity for interactive Q&A gaining insight into the unique roles and perspectives of team members, improving communication and outcomes.

Key takeaways include strategies for building stronger relationships, navigating policies, and accessing resources for complex challenges. Participants will leave equipped to foster effective partnerships that benefit children and families.

3. Sebago - 'Connecting with Kids and Families through a Balance of Structure and Nurture'

*Presented by: Marisa Stam, Executive Director of Family and Community Care - Curtis Lake Church, Trust-Based Relational Intervention®*

This workshop, designed for professionals, will explore the 5 B's impacted by trauma (behavior, brain, body, biology, and beliefs) and how effective engagement with parents (biological and resource) can build felt-safety in relationships and drive improved outcomes. We hope to provide tangible tools for you to connect more effectively with those you serve.

3:30-4:00 Lobby - **Networking & Resource Exploration**

# Friday Evening

6:00-7:00 P.M. Ballroom - **Meaningful Connections Mixer**

Join us for an evening of connection, conversation, and fun at the Meaningful Connections Mixer! This event is designed to bring resource families together in a warm and welcoming atmosphere to build meaningful relationships and strengthen our community. Whether you're here to share experiences, make new friends, or simply relax in the company of those who understand the unique journey of foster, adoptive, and kinship families, this mixer is for you.

What to Expect:

- Mocktail Refreshments: Enjoy a variety of creative and refreshing non-alcoholic beverages crafted to delight your taste buds.
- Delicious Snacks: Indulge in an assortment of light bites and snacks while mingling with fellow caregivers and advocates.
- Indoor Activities: Break the ice with fun activities and conversation starters to spark meaningful dialogue and shared laughter.



## 8:45-9:00 A.M. Ballroom - **Welcome**

*Presented by: Travis Bryant, Executive Director Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine Inc., and The Kinship Program*

## 9:00 -10:00 A.M. Ballroom - **Keynote: 'One Step at a Time: Walking Toward Purpose and Inner Strength'**

*Presented by: Nicholas Tucker, Youth Camp Owner & Inspirational Speaker*

In this powerful session, Nick takes you on a journey through his childhood, sharing the emotional and spiritual impact of growing up with a terminally ill mother battling heroin addiction. Discover how the love and stability of a foster family changed the course of his life and inspired his path forward. Nick's story is a testament to how meaningful connections can help us rise from the ashes of trauma and lead us to discover purpose, resilience, and extraordinary possibilities.

## 10:00-10:15 A.M. **Break**

## 10:15-12:00 P.M. **Breakout Workshop**

### 1. Cumberland - 'Roots and Wings: Nurturing Connections for Adopted Children'

*Presented by: Hether Anderson, AFFM Lead Resource Family Trainer & Carrie Loring, Biological Grandmother*

"Roots and Wings" is often used as a metaphor, representing the balance between grounding oneself in one's origins (roots) and fostering the freedom and empowerment to explore the world and grow (wings). Maintaining connections with family and friends during foster care and adoption is crucial for the emotional well-being of the child as well as for maintaining a sense of stability, identity, and belonging. It can be a delicate balance, but with thoughtful effort, it can be very beneficial. By the end of this workshop, participants will: Understand the importance of connections for the emotional, social, and identity development of adopted children. Learn strategies to foster and maintain meaningful connections. Gain tools to address challenges related to connections in adoption scenarios. Hear scenarios shared by a grandmother who is on that journey, right now, here in Maine.

### 2. Sebago - 'Building Connections that Make a Difference'

*Presented by: Marisa Stam, Executive Director of Family and Community Care - Curtis Lake Church, Trust-Based Relational Intervention*

Building healthy connections is the first step to disarming fear-based behavior that keeps our kids stuck in survival mode. This workshop, designed for parents, will explore engagement strategies for parents to better connect with their children, demystify some confusing behaviors, and bring hope that healing is possible.

### 3. Ballroom - 'Catchy Vibes: Exploring Co-Regulation and Emotional Awareness'

*Presented by: Heather Bowie, AFFM Resource Family Trainer*

Have you ever paused to notice your thoughts or how your body reacts in stressful situations? Do you wish you could respond more effectively in the moment or restore balance when life feels overwhelming?

In this interactive workshop, we'll explore the basics of Polyvagal Theory and how it can help you better regulate your emotions and energy. Discover how your ability to stay calm and present can positively influence those around you, creating a ripple effect of connection and balance.

Join us to practice practical skills for staying grounded, engaged, and calm, even in challenging moments. Let's work together to "catch the vibe" and create a sense of harmony for ourselves and others.

# Saturday Afternoon

12:00-1:00 P.M. **Lunch**

1:00-1:30 P.M. Lobby - **Networking & Resource Exploration**

1:30-3:30 P.M. Ballroom - 'Unpacking The Complexities of Resource Families & Birth Family Connections Q&A'

*Presented by: Nicholas Tucker, Nicholas Tucker – Youth Camp Owner & Inspirational Speaker*

Join Nick Tucker and his guardians for an open and heartfelt panel discussion exploring the complexities of resource families and their relationships with birth families. Through personal stories and candid dialogue, this session will unpack the emotional, practical, and relational challenges faced by resource families, while also celebrating the meaningful connections that can arise. This is a unique opportunity to ask questions, gain insight, and better understand the delicate balance of fostering healing and connection within families.

3:30-4:00 P.M. Lobby - **Networking & Resource Exploration**

4:00 P.M. Conference Closure



# AFFM's 28th Annual Conference Agenda

## Friday April 11th, 2025

8:00 -8:15 AM	Registration
8:30-8:45 AM	Ballroom: Welcome - Travis Bryant, Executive Director, Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine Inc., and The Kinship Program
8:45-9:00 AM	Ballroom: Opening Remarks - Bobbi Johnson, LMSW, Director Office of Child and Family Services
9:00-10:00 AM	Ballroom: Keynote -The Human Need For Belonging- Dr. Amelia Franck Meyer
10:00-10:10 AM	Break
10:10-12:00 AM	Breakout Workshops <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ballroom: Workshop - Families are the Solution: Co-designing Changes Everything - Dr. Amelia Franck Meyer</li> <li>2. Sebago: Workshop - Bridging Hearts: Trauma-Informed Strategies -Catherine Cutler/AFFM</li> </ol>
12:00 PM-1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00-1:30 PM	Networking & Resource Exploration
1:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Breakout Workshops <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ballroom: Building Your Toolkit for Healthy (Youth) Connections - Youth Leadership Advisory Team</li> <li>2. Cumberland: Partnering for Healthier Happier Outcomes: The Kinship Experience - Bette Hoxie</li> <li>3. Sebago: Connecting with Kids and Families through Balance, Structure and Nurture-Marissa Stam</li> </ol>
3:30 PM- 4:00 PM	Lobby: Networking & Resource Exploration
6:00 PM- 7:00 PM	Ballroom: Meaningful Connections Mixer

## Saturday April 12th, 2025

8:30 AM	Registration (Saturday attendees)
8:45 AM	Welcome - Travis Bryant, Executive Director, Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine Inc., and The Kinship Program
9:00 AM	Ballroom: Keynote - One Step at a Time: Walking Toward Purpose and Inner Strength - Nick Tucker
10:10-10:15 AM	Break
10:15-12:00 AM	Breakout Workshops <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ballroom: Roots and Wings: Nurturing Connections for Adopted Children-Hether Anderson</li> <li>2. Sebago: Building Connections that Make a Difference-Marissa Stam</li> <li>3. Cumberland: Catchy Vibes: Exploring Co-Regulation and Emotional Awareness - Heather Bowie</li> </ol>
12:00 PM-1:00PM	Lunch
1:00 PM-1:30PM	Networking & Resource Exploration
1:30 PM - 4:00 PM	Ballroom: Unpacking The Complexities of Resource Families & Birth Family Connections Q&A - Nick Tucker, Youth Camp Owner & Inspirational Speaker

4:00 PM Conference Closure



## Lodging Information

DoubleTree by Hilton

363 Maine Mall Road,

S. Portland, ME, 04106

1-207-775-6161



### Amenities Include:

All guest rooms feature a refrigerator, microwave, safe and complimentary Wi-Fi.

Ideally located 2 miles from Portland International Jetport, 5 miles from downtown.

Within walking distance to The Maine Mall and several restaurants.

Heated indoor pool and fully equipped fitness center.

159.00/night. Book before March 11, 2025. Call with code AFFM or [BOOK HERE](#)

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## Additional Information

- The annual silent auction will take place throughout the conference in Whaleback Room. Bid on a basket filled with goodies! 100% of proceeds goes back to assist resource families. Winners of auctioned items will be announced Saturday.
- Quiet Connection Room, Located in the Little River room, is a place attendees can take a break at anytime during the conference.
- All attendees can take part in a chance to win a door prize and the 50/50 raffle! Winners will be announced during Saturday's lunch.
- If you are a resource family and in need of a scholarship, please contact AFFM. For more information visit [www.affm.net](http://www.affm.net), AFFM's Facebook page, or follow AFFM on twitter @affmaine.

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Affiliated With:  
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National Foster Parent Association  
Generations United  
  
Partnering With: Department of Health and Human Services

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*Conference details Inside!*



## 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**



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