

Family Connections

Volume 12, Issue 4 ~ Spring 2014

In This Issue:

Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board

• Page 2

New Health Care Law

• Page 2

Special Needs Child Care

• Page 3

Policy Updates

• Pages 6 - 7

Adoption Tax Credit

• Page 9

Foster & Adoption Resource Centers

• Page 10

Waiting Children

• Page 11

And much more. . .

Family Connections is edited and published by:

Department of Social Services
Children's Division
205 Jefferson Street, PO BOX 88
Jefferson City, MO 65103
www.dss.mo.gov

In conjunction with:

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition
1750 S. Brentwood Blvd., Ste. 210
Saint Louis, MO 63144
800.FOSTER.3
www.foster-adopt.org

If you no longer wish to receive this publication, please request in writing:

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition
Attn: Jessi Brawley
1750 S. Brentwood Blvd., Ste. 210
Saint Louis, MO 63144
By telephone toll-free:
800.FOSTER.3 (314.367.8373)

Student Financial Aid

Students should apply for federal assistance by filling out the Free Application for Student Financial Aid (FAFSA). The amount of financial aid you qualify for is primarily based on family income, but here's the good news: foster youth (and some former foster youth) can declare themselves a 1-person family. Their parent's income would not be counted, possibly resulting in more financial aid. This rule also applies to youth adopted from foster care after their 13th birthday. For more information, visit www.fafsa.ed.gov.

It pays to file early!

No matter what your individual state or school filing deadline, when it comes to your FAFSA, the sooner you file after January 1st each year (the date that the federal processor begins accepting applications), the better!

Many types of financial aid (particularly need-based aid, including grants, loans and work-study programs) are limited and are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Therefore, the sooner your FAFSA is fully processed and released to your school's financial aid administrators, the better your chances of receiving consideration for the maximum amount of financial aid for which you may be eligible.

Important 2013/2014 FAFSA Deadlines for Missouri Students:

Federal Deadline

- Online applications must be submitted by midnight 6/30/14
- Any corrections or updates must be submitted by midnight 9/20/14

State Deadline

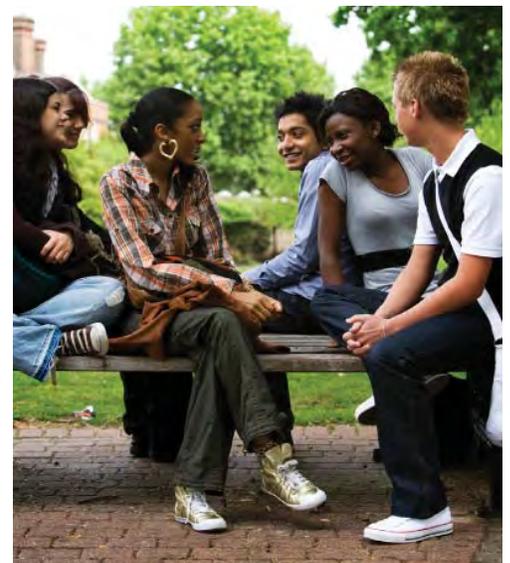
- Missouri - by midnight 4/1/13 by midnight

College Deadline

- Check with the college(s) you are interested in attending. You may also want to ask your college about their definition of an application deadline whether it is the date they receive your FAFSA, or the date your FAFSA is processed.

Links to other resources:

www.collegeboard.org
www.fastweb.com
www.finaid.org
www.savingforcollege.com
www.UNCF.org
www.orphan.org
www.jimcaseyyouth.org
www.getcollegefunds.org
www.collegenet.com
www.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html
www.collegescholarships.com
www.nrcys.ou.edu



Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board

Board Representatives

Northwest Region

- Rep 1: VACANT
- Derek Williams 816.261.5587
dwilliams@cameronschools.org

Northeast Region

- Suzie Forbis 573.881.7339
srforbis@gmail.com
- Karen Anderson 573.881.5799
kander04@aol.com

Southeast Region

- Dean Aye 417.260.3772
pitstop1@centurytel.net
- Rep 2: VACANT

Southwest Region

- Eric Pilson 417.779.9161
upickpigs@centurytel.net
- Melinda Nicholson 417.766.5124
marvandmelinda@yahoo.com

Kansas City

- Janet Richardson 816.796.4497
jnrichardson@sbcglobal.net
- Linda Hosman 816.699.3960
lindahosman@yahoo.com

St. Louis City

- Rep 1: VACANT
- Rep 2: VACANT

St. Louis County

- Kelly Floyd 314.598.1334
kelly.floyd@edwardjones.com
- Michelle Martin 314.607.3029
ammempowerment@yahoo.com

Foster Care Associations

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association

- Lori Ross 816.686.0463
rross600@aol.com

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition

- Nickie Steinhoff 800.FOSTER.3
nickiesteinhoff@foster-adopt.org

Office of the Child Advocate

- Kelly Schultz 866.457.2302
kelly.schultz@oca.mo.gov

Since its creation in statute during the 2011 legislative session, the Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board has worked hard to establish itself in compliance with statute, and to perform the duties assigned. "You will be pleased with the progress we've made. We look forward to continuing the work we've begun and working together to improve Missouri's foster care and adoption systems," said Dean Aye, Chairman.

The board establishes procedures to review the Children's Division policy and provide written opinions and recommendations for change to the policy, provide draft policy suggestions for improvements in foster care or adoption practices; and provide (in accordance with section 210.566) content of in-service training to be provided by the Children's Division to foster and adoptive parents. Board members are appointed to represent each of the seven Children's Division historical regions of the state.

State Foster and Adoption Board meeting minutes are available at: <http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/fostercare/foster-care-adoption-board/pdf/130312-minutes-foster-care-adoption-board.pdf>. Details available at: <http://www.boards.mo.gov/userpages/board.aspx?332>

The Missouri State Foster Care & Adoption Board consists of two representatives from seven regions who are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the senate, based upon recommendations by regional foster care and adoption boards, or other similar entities.

Reminder: Resource parents be sure to check your payment each month to make sure there has not been a payment error (under or over payment). If this does occur contact your local licensing worker immediately to correct the error.

New Health Care Law: what does it mean?



COVER MISSOURI

Cover Missouri is a project of the Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) to promote quality, affordable health coverage for every Missourian. MFH is the convener of the Cover Missouri Coalition and is an independent philanthropic foundation dedicated to improving the health of the uninsured and underserved.

Under the law, most Americans will be required to have health insurance starting January 1st, 2014. There are some exceptions. The Missouri Health Insurance Marketplace is a website where you can compare and buy the insurance plan that fits your needs. You can use the Missouri Marketplace to buy insurance for yourself or your family if you are uninsured or don't have access to affordable insurance through your employer.

Cover Missouri can help you find everything you need to know about including:

- new health insurance rules and requirements;
- health insurance basics;
- ways to help pay for insurance;
- the Missouri Health Insurance Marketplace;
- and how to buy insurance.

Call 1-800-318-2596 (TTY: 1-855-889-4325) to speak to someone who can help. Or, visit www.covermissouri.org.

Policy Update and Resources for Parents

Special Needs Child Care: United 4 Children's Inclusive Child Care

All families have their own special circumstances, including schedules, the family budget, and what works best for their kids. United 4 Children's (U4C) resource and referral service works to assist families in navigating the array of options and assessing the health, safety, and quality indicators in programs.

Specialized referral and support services are available for families whose children have special needs to locate inclusive child care...programs that are dedicated to giving the best early education to ALL children, including children with disabilities or special needs. U4C inclusion consultants work with all child care programs to improve the quality and availability of inclusive places for children, with a special focus on teaching strategies to build social-emotional competencies and reduce challenging behavior in the classroom.

U4C's Resource and Referral helps families locate and select child care best meeting their unique needs. Families may contact Lisa Eberle-Mayse at 314-531-1412 ext. 17 or e-mail to eberlemaysel@united4children.org. Toll free 1-800-467-2322. Customized consumer education materials and referrals to child care programs are available online or walk-in.

Family Spotlight

The Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Board recognizes the Fain family for their service to Missouri's children. **Here is their story:**

Bill and Sammie Fain married in 1997. "We knew we wanted children but hadn't thought of being foster parents until we met a caseworker through the Children's Division who described how many kids are looking for stable homes," Sammie said.

"We thought we wanted, at the most, two children. Through our Spalding classes, we learned about a sibling group of four in need of an adoptive family. The oldest was six years old at the time, and the youngest was 9 months old."

There were a lot of questions running through the Fain's minds. Would the older children have experienced trauma, and would the couple be able to meet the children's needs? Were they equipped to handle an infant along with the other siblings?

"We did respite care at first," Sammie said, "and fell in love. The children were so loving and really smart. We knew we wanted them to be a part of our family."

Then came another surprise: a fifth sibling, a little boy, was born. The Fains did not hesitate to keep the children together. In this way, the couple, who originally thought they wanted two kids, became parents to five.

Asked what she thought was the biggest challenge being a Resource Parent, Sammie hesitated and then replied, "I think there is a lack of public education about the foster care system. Most people don't realize the stigma the kids face every day. They are children and circumstances are not their fault."

Bill and Sammie Fain live in Springfield, MO with their five children, now ages nine, six, five, four and three. In addition to their five adult children and 14 grandchildren, the Fain's family is complete.



Feeling Kinda Blue... Connect Relate Renew

Feelingkindablue.com is a social network that serves those who manage depression and other mood disorders. The mission is to reduce social isolation by making connections through experience sharing. People can post, blog, chat, share artwork, music, and photos.

The website is updated and maintained by Provident Inc., a nonprofit agency St. Louis. Provident provides crisis intervention services through their Life Crisis Services. More information is available at www.feelingkindablue.com.



Parent Education

What My White Parents Didn't Know and Why I Turned Out OK Anyway

by April Dinwoodie and Barry Chaffkin

April Dinwoodie is an adoptee and cofounder of Fostering Change for Children and is the chief executive of the Donaldson Adoption Institute. Barry Chaffkin, LCSW, is chief executive officer and cofounder of Fostering Change for Children and an adjunct professor at the Columbia School of Social Work. The article is based on training they present at conferences around the country. Although it features April's first person narrative, April and Barry together developed the advice. Their goal is to help adoptive parents and professionals do better for children adopted across racial lines. For more information, contact April at april.dinwoodie@gmail.com or Barry at barry@fosteringchangeforchildren.org.

Adoption is a complicated endeavor, and every adoption begins with the loss of the first or birth family. While very often the result is something wonderful, everyone in the adoption constellation will experience issues that require attention. When adoption is combined with differences of race and class, we double down on the complexity. As adoptive parents sign up for this experience, adoptees who have lived it and professionals in the field must be their guides.

My arrival (with little preparation)

I was adopted from foster care when I was about eight months old. Tom and Sandi Dinwoodie decided to expand their family of two boys and a girl by adopting another girl. My parents had solid family values with hard work, integrity, and God as their anchors. My mom is mostly Italian with some English, and my father is Scottish and English. When the adoption agency asked if they were open to adopting a baby of a different race, my parents did not give it a second thought. They were confident they could love any baby regardless of race.

During the adoption process, there was little conversation about what it meant to have a baby of another race. In fact, agency staff took a slightly vague stance, saying, "She may be of another race." When I arrived, there was no question—I was brown. The agency told my parents my birth mother was white and my birth father was black. The paperwork I received later also took a noncommittal stance, noting that I had a birthmark that could "indicate" I was of mixed race.

I attribute this vagueness to the era. During the 1970s, there was almost no attention paid to race and class in adoption. This was coupled with a dearth of tools for parents like mine. The only thing my mom remembers

is a social worker telling them to use the word "adoption" in regular conversation.

There was no guidance about how to address adoption, let alone how my race might change our family dynamic. There was no discussion of the needs of a brown baby, toddler, gradeschooler, teen, young adult, or grown up. It was simply ignored. Our family was left to our own devices.

My no-nonsense, New England parents were as ready as they could be—although some extended family and community were not. When my super-excited parents invited friends and family to meet me, one relative remarked, "Why would we want to come and see that?" We never really saw them again. Certainly, my parents were not prepared for that.

Adoption is a complicated endeavor, and every adoption begins with the loss of the first or birth family. When adoption is combined with differences of race and class, we double down on the complexity.

While times have changed, there is still a lot more to be done. We're always grateful to get a call from an agency or group requesting our workshop—that means that more people want to have real discussions about race.

In addition to offering training about issues of race, agencies can have honest conversations with parents before placements are made. Through an extensive preparation process, agencies can make sure parents have information about how adopting a child of a different race can affect the child. Parents may also need help to think about how the world's perception of the family will change, and how to prepare for positive and negative changes. Most of all, agencies can ensure adopters understand they need to become strong advocates for their children—taking on issues of race and racism in new ways.

Figuring out I was different

Until nursery school, I thought every family had a brown person like me at home. Even though I knew our closest neighbors were white, I thought other brown people would just show up one day and things would make sense. Over time, it became clear that almost everyone looked like my family and almost no one looked like me. And that was just how life was going to be. At that point, it was not necessarily a problem but as time went on, being brown in a very white world would present challenges.

Parent Education

I recently asked my bestie from early childhood if she could recall anything related to race about our friendship. She told me she remembered hearing about the Ku Klux Klan and how terrified she was. She thought they might come and get her for being friends with me, but she made a very conscious decision to remain my friend because I was worth the risk! Adoptive parents must be aware that many thoughts swirl around in young minds that children don't always articulate. For younger kids, books like *We're Different, We're the Same* from the Sesame Street collection can be a great way to start a discussion about race. (Good books for kids of all ages are at tapestrybooks.com.) Current events—even when the news is difficult—also present opportunities for conversations about race and class. Support groups for children and teens involved in trans racial adoptions can be helpful since children often learn best from their peers. Groups can help transracial adoptees to normalize their experience.

What about my hair?!

When I think about the evolution of my identity, one thing literally and figuratively rises to the top—my hair! Although the adoption agency was vague about my race before placement, there was no doubt that my hair was not Caucasian hair. I had coarse brown curly hair that was a mystery for years. My mom didn't have the skills or the network of black or brown friends to acquire the skills to style my hair in cute cornrows or fancy afro-puffs.

She had patience, however, and did her best to organize my hair into something presentable. Dealing with my hair was literally and figuratively painful for both of us. It hurt like heck when my mom would use a brush or comb to try to tame the wild beast. In spite of the hard work, we were both frustrated. Again, my no-nonsense parents did not make any special arrangements for my hair, and found no salons or products. In the end, my dad resorted to cutting my hair into an uneven little fro.

Support groups for children and teens involved in transracial adoptions can be helpful since children often learn best from their peers.

The early years of trying to manage my hair set a foundation for how I felt about my appearance. In grade school and high school and even a bit in college, I felt unattractive and tried to get my hair to look somewhat like my white friends' hair. Some of this is the usual

young person's angst, but added layers of adoption and race came into play. It is difficult when you look different from most people around you, and you do not know how to create the look of the black and brown people you identify as attractive. It has taken years of trial and error, but I have come to terms with my appearance.

The best hair care advice we can give parents is to take hair care seriously and learn the skills to properly do your child's hair. Understand that your hair and skin are very different from your child's. Investigate the products that work for your child. It is so important for parents to find the right resources and experts who can help. One good site is www.chocolatehairvanillacare.com. Professionals and parents, please take elements related to appearance and identity seriously!

The best hair care advice we can give parents is to take hair care seriously and learn the skills to properly do your child's hair.

How do I navigate dating?

With my hair a hot mess, it was tough to feel attractive as I entered high school. Although I was popular and did well in school, I was not confident about how I looked and struggled with who I really was—not simply related to race but also related to my adoption. Some was regular teenage stuff, but there were deeper feelings about where I came from and how I fit into the world.

Dating brought some of these feelings to the surface. I was not particularly interested in the (almost all white) boys at school, and I don't think they were particularly interested in me. Whenever there was a young man of color around, guess who everyone thought he should date!?

I begged my parents to let me go to an under-21 club in town because I knew there was a more diverse group of kids there, and I was aching to be around people who looked more like me. Reluctantly, my parents gave in. I was over-the-moon happy; it felt great to be around people who looked like me and liked the same things I did. I met my first real boyfriend who was brown like me. At the same time, I never resented my white family. In fact I loved them so much for letting me explore experiences they did not understand. There was also a point when I remember thinking, I am half white, too. It felt good to acknowledge that that was a part of who I was.

Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

Resource Family In-Service Training Request (CD13-71):

Training opportunities should be provided by the agency who supervises the license or approval to assist the resource providers in completing the required training hours. Each agency should notify resource providers of training opportunities available. Resource providers may participate in training not sponsored, facilitated, or provided by the Children's Division to meet the training hour requirement and to meet their training needs as identified on the Professional Family Development Plan. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-071.pdf>

Expanded Medicaid Eligibility for Former Foster Care Youth (CD13-74):

Senate Bill (SB) 127, which extends medical coverage for former foster youth up to age twenty-six (26) went into effect August 28, 2013. Youth who are "not eligible under another mandatory coverage group" are those who are disabled, receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or receiving Medicare. Staff should refer these youth to the Family Support Division to complete an application at least 30 days to six months prior to aging out of Children's Division custody. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-074.pdf>

72 Hour Plan and FST Template (CD13-75):

Research suggests when families are engaged, supported, and play a significant role in case planning, they are more motivated to achieve their case plan. A Family Support Team meeting is a vehicle for family engagement. To improve family engagement and shared decision making, a workgroup developed the FST-2 and the FST-3 for use during Family Support Team Meetings. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-075.pdf>

075.pdf

Individuals Eligible for Guardianship Subsidy (CD13-76):

Senate Bill 47 has updated state statute 453.072, RSMo to include additional eligible parties able to receive guardianship subsidy. The law now states: "1. Any subsidies available to adoptive parents pursuant to section 453.073 and section 453.074 shall also be available to a qualified relative of a child or a qualified close non-related person who is granted legal guardianship of the child in the same manner as such subsidies are available for adoptive parents. 2. As used in this section: (1) "Relative" means any grandparent, aunt, uncle, adult sibling of the child or adult first cousin of the child, or any other person related to the child by blood or affinity; (2) "Close non-related person" means any non-related person whose life is so intermingled with the child such that the relationship is similar to a family relationship." <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-076.pdf>

Re-entry Legislation (CD13-78):

Effective August 28, 2013 youth who left care after the age of 18 but are not yet 21 may elect to come back into care per S.B. 205 (2013) and S.B. 208 (2013). If it is deemed to be in the best interest of the youth, the youth may have his or her custody returned to the Children's Division through a petition to the Court from the youth, Children's Division, or Juvenile Officer. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-078.pdf>

Revision of Critical Event Protocol and Forms (CD13-80):

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform staff of changes to the critical event review protocol which includes: revision of the Critical Event Report (CS-23), elimination

of the Alert Notification Report (CD-158), additions to the Critical Event Case Review Tool Kit, CD-164, and the introduction of the Critical Event Protocol grid, CD-169. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-080.pdf>

Informed Consent (CD13-81):

In order for children in the custody of the Children's Division (CD) to receive appropriate health or mental health services, staff shall facilitate the informed consent process by involving the resource providers, older youth, and the parents/caregivers, unless parental rights are terminated. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-081.pdf>

Collaboration to Strengthen Educational Successes of Children and Youth in Foster Care (CD13-83):

A quality education is critical to any child's well-being and future success. For youth in foster care, a quality education depends on the involvement and support of the courts, child welfare, and education agencies. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance for strengthening our collaborative efforts regarding educational stability and continuity for all children in foster care who receive educational services. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-083.pdf>

Revised Delayed Conclusion Policy (CD13-84):

Revisions have been made to the Child Welfare Manual in order to:

- Emphasize the need to complete hotline reports in accordance with standards outlined in law and policy
- Introduce a good cause analysis when there is an identified need to delay the Division's

Keep Current... This is a brief summary of the current policies impacting the Children's Division. A more complete explanation with additional updates is available at: www.dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/

Policy Updates and Resources for Parents

Continued from page 6...

conclusion beyond thirty (30) days from receipt of a hotline report

- Introduce timely conclusion letters which may be sent to law enforcement, prosecuting attorneys and/or other multi-disciplinary contacts as needed and appropriate when the Division encounters a barrier to completing the CA/N Investigation or Family Assessment within thirty (30) days pursuant to Section 210.145.15 RSMo.
- Clarify minimum contact standards to assure children's safety <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-084.pdf>

Revised De Novo Judicial Review Policy and Procedures (CD13-85):

Revisions were made to enhance the Division's capacity to ensure the Central Registry reflects the Court's ruling specific to Circuit and/or Appellate Court trials. De novo judicial reviews occur when an alleged perpetrator disagrees with the Child Abuse and Neglect Review Board's (CANRB) decision to uphold the Division's finding and files the matter in Circuit Court. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-085.pdf>

Revised Differential Response Policy (CD13-86):

Revisions were made to clarify the parameters of the differential response used by the Children's Division when receiving and responding to various types of Child Abuse/Neglect (CA/N) hotline reports. The Children's Division (CD) utilizes protocols based on Structured Decision Making (SDM) principles in order to: Obtain and classify information provided by the hotline reporter; and Give priority to ensuring the safety and well-being of children. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-086.pdf>

Introduction of the NCFAS

G+R Assessment Tool (CD13-90):

The NCFAS G+R tools replace the CD-14 and CD-14A and will be used for initial assessment and reassessment in open FCS and AC cases. These tools are designed to assist staff in conducting a thorough and comprehensive assessment of family's history, structure and functioning, identifying protective capacities and child vulnerabilities. A comprehensive assessment should be completed on each open family case. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2013/cd13-090.pdf>



Children's Division Director Named

Nationally recognized leader with nearly three decades experience to lead agency working to prevent child abuse and neglect

Tim Decker, Director of Missouri Division of Youth Services (DYS), has been named director of Children's Division of the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS). Decker assumed his new duties on Nov. 25th.

"Tim has served the Department of Social Services since 1984 and helped the Division of Youth Services become a nationally recognized program that helps troubled young people become law-abiding citizens," said Brian Kinkade, acting director of the Department of Social Services. "Tim is a respected leader for his innovative work and I believe his strong leadership skills, depth of experience, and success in strengthening Missouri families makes him the ideal person to fulfill the position of Children's Division director."

"I look forward to working with our staff, partners, and communities to protect children from abuse and neglect and ensure that those in care are provided quality services and the opportunity for a safe and prosperous future," said Decker. Decker, a past president of the Council of Juvenile Corrections Administrators, has served as Director of the Division of Youth Services (DYS) since 2007 and led DYS to earn the Harvard Innovations in American Government Award in 2008.

In 2012, Decker worked with leaders across various state departments and the court system to establish Missouri's Crossover Youth Initiative focused on preventing youth with traumatic histories of abuse/neglect from becoming involved in juvenile delinquency, as well as improving practices and outcomes for those youth who become involved in juvenile justice.

Decker earned a degree in Social Work and Psychology from Park University in Parkville, Missouri and completed the Institute for Education Leadership Education Policy Fellowship Program in 2007.

Parent Education (continued from page 5)

continued from Page 5

As I went off to college, I started to feel increasingly confident about how I looked and even more confident of the person I was inside. Dating became easier and more fun!

We advise parents to take great care when helping adoptees navigate the dating landscape. This time in your child's life is going to be tough, and elements of adoption, identity, and race can make it even more challenging. One place to start is to ensure that the whole family has a diverse community of friends and neighbors. If parents do not have friends who reflect their child's culture, they should develop connections within those communities. This isn't just about your child having a single friend of the same race; it is about the family becoming a multicultural family, which may include changing neighborhoods, places of worship, or traditions. It can be challenging to become part of a new community, and often requires parents to step outside their comfort zone. But it's also a healthy experience that gives you the opportunity to embrace your child's heritage—and even to experience some of the challenges she lives every day.

You think I should know what?

Throughout my life, perceptions and assumptions got me and others in a little trouble. For a brown girl in a white community, trying to navigate stereotypes was tricky. There were times when I was terrified to be asked to moonwalk or break dance (yes, both grown ups and kids would ask). Even as a corporate professional, my colleagues expect me to be expert on matters of race. As someone who was raised in a white family and a mostly white community, I often don't have the experiences others think I might have.

Preparing children for these types of conversations is important. First and foremost, parents have to ensure children are comfortable with their heritage. This means you need to start with knowing about your child's heritage. Parents need to be fierce about asking questions and agencies need to provide as much information as possible. Together, families can learn about the child's background through cooking classes, language lessons, and shared cultural experiences. In this process, though, parents may also have to help their children handle reactions from their community of origin. In some cases, transracially adopted children aren't seen as full members of the community.

At the same time, parents need to help children learn to talk about race and culture by being open to questions and by starting conversations themselves. These steps will help build children's sense of identity, which will help them manage difficult conversations and

turn discussions into learning opportunities. When challenging conversations come up, parents also have an opportunity to model behavior—parents can gently educate people who ask the sometimes inappropriate questions while showing their children that they have their back.

I'm OK, but we can make life easier for others.

My white parents didn't do all the things we now advise parents to do and didn't understand all of the challenges we'd face. There were certainly things my parents did not know or expect, and were simply not prepared to manage. On the other hand, they were rock solid human beings and they loved and cared for me. They gave me a sturdy foundation and roots that allowed me to grow and blossom.

Even though my parents could not shield me from every ugly or confusing race-motivated element of life, they raised me with love and a practical spirit. They provided safety, a sense of self-worth, and encouragement. As a result, I turned out OK and so many children adopted across racial lines will turn out OK too.

But today, as a group of professionals, parents, educators, and influencers, we can do more for other adoptees. We can equip, inform, and support parents who are signing up for transracial parenting. We must have the meaningful—sometimes tough—conversations with these parents, and provide them with tools to take along on the journey. My hope is that adult adoptees continue to share their experiences and that people listen, adapt, and continue to improve the adoption experience for all involved.

Adoption is a lifelong journey, and children will need parents' help to navigate complex issues of race and adoption through many life stages. Parents—please let your child know that while you may not always have the answers, you are willing to talk about anything. If you aren't sure about how to have these conversations, we encourage you to find support groups, trainings, and other resources in your community. If they don't exist, you could become a trailblazer who starts one in your area!

Reprinted from Adoptalk, published by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, St. Paul, Minnesota; 651-644-3036; www.nacac.org.

To learn more about April, visit her website: www.aprildinwoodie.com



Resources for Youth & Parents



The 40th Annual NACAC Conference
Permanency Matters: A Family for Growing Up and Growing Old

Co-Sponsored by: **Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association**

Kansas City, Missouri
July 23-26, 2014
Pre-conference sessions July 23; full conference July 24-26

80 Workshops by expert professionals including:



- older child adoption
- parenting children with special needs
- race, culture, & diversity in adoption
- advanced issues in adoption & therapy
- recruitment & pre-adoption services
- adoption agency management
- advocacy & public policy
- search & open adoption
- post-adoption services

...because every child needs a permanent, loving, and culturally sensitive family.

info@nacac.org / 651.644.3036 / www.nacac.org

Beginning to Explore Adoption Together



The Beat is a place for adopted teens to discover, connect and share their voice. The Beat was created to give adopted teens a chance to discover more about adoption, connect with one another online, express thoughts and feelings around adoption and hear from others with similar experiences. It's a place for youth to share their voice.

Spend some time visiting the pages of the Beat. Take a look at the pictures, videos and conversations from other adopted teens. The hope is that this is a place where youth can share their true thoughts and feelings about their story.

www.adoptionlearningpartners.org/beat

Federal Adoption Tax Credit - As part of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, the legislation included a provision that made the adoption tax credit permanent. Unfortunately it did not make the adoption credit refundable, so it will only benefit those adoptive families who have federal income tax liability.

For 2013, the maximum adoption credit and exclusion is \$12,970. The credit will begin to phase out for families with modified adjusted gross incomes above \$194,580, and the credit will go away completely for those with incomes above \$234,580.

For 2013 and beyond, the credit will remain flat for special needs adoptions, meaning that those who adopt children from the U.S. who receive adoption assistance/adoption subsidy benefits can claim the maximum credit regardless of their expenses. For other adoptions (except for step-parent adoptions), parents can claim the credit based on their qualified adoption expenses.

The credit is not refundable for 2013 or future years, but the credit can be carried forward for up to five additional years. The North American Council on Adoptable Children maintains a frequently asked question sheet at www.nacac.org/taxcredit/faqs.html.

Missouri Adoption Tax Credit - Missouri families adopting a special needs child may be eligible to receive a Missouri Adoption Tax Credit for non-recurring adoption expenses. These expenses can be claimed up to \$10,000 if the adopting parent(s) has not been reimbursed by federal, state or local resources (sections 135.325 - 135.339, RSMo) or the expenses incurred by the family exceed those reimbursed by federal, state or local resources. Most families adopting a youth from foster care in Missouri do not have any qualifying unreimbursed adoption related expenses. If you have questions about a qualifying expense, contact your subsidy worker or one of the Associations listed on page 2 of this newsletter.

Foster and Adoption Resource Centers

**Eastern MO Adoption Resource Center
Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition**
1750 S. Brentwood Blvd., Ste. 210
St. Louis, Missouri 63144
800.FOSTER.3 / www.foster-adopt.org

Therapists Trained in Adoption Competence

Long-needed supports for foster/adoptive parents continue to expand in Missouri! The Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition just graduated 14 therapists from a curriculum on adoption competency.

As we all know, children adopted from foster care can present challenging behavioral and emotional responses. For several years, the Coalition has sought a program to help therapists address the wide range of concerns unique to our kids.

Finally, the Coalition discovered a program Training for Adoption Competence (TAC) created by a Baltimore-based organization called the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.). TAC is a 78-hour, post-masters curriculum developed in collaboration with national experts in the field of child welfare, adoption, and mental health.

The Coalition was selected as one of seven national sites to implement TAC. Therapists completing TAC participate in 13 training modules and monthly case consultation sessions over a six-month period.

Training topics include:

- Trauma and Brain Neurobiology
- Clinical Issues in Attachment
- Adopted Adolescents and Identity Development
- Managing Challenging Behaviors
- Openness in Adoption

If you live in the Metro St. Louis area and are interested in contacting one of the 14 therapists who have completed TAC, reach out to Nickie Steinhoff, Director of Training & Community Supports at nickiesteinhoff@foster-adopt.org or 800.FOSTER.3 (314.367.8373).

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association (MFCAA)
18600 E. 37th Terrace S., Box 11
Independence, Missouri 64057
816.350.0215 / www.mfcaa.org

As the Western Missouri Adoption Resource Center, Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association (MFCAA) continues to provide services to foster, kinship and adoptive families. Their new website launched in August of 2013, with exciting new information and updated services. Visit www.mfcaa.org for more.

In addition to the new website, MFCAA is excited this quarter to begin working on resource development (licensing foster, adoptive, and kinship homes) in Northwest Missouri through a partnership with Cornerstones of Care and MBCH Children & Family Ministries. They anticipate rolling out substantial support and retention services to families in this region in the spring. For more information, email info@mfcaa.org or call 816.350.0215. Or visit them at the address above during business hours.

Thanks to the generosity of the legislature and the governor, two new Adoption Resource Centers have been funded and are currently providing services.

Family Matters serves children, youth, and parents by providing a variety of support groups, counseling services, and by making connections to community resources. Call 417.866.FMRC (3672) to make an appointment with a Resource Specialist. They offer FREE services to support and empower foster and adoptive families. Family Matters Resource Center is located at: 1774 ½ S. Grant, Springfield, MO 65807. Services are also available by appointment. www.familymatterscares.org.

Central Missouri Foster Care & Adoption Association educates, supports, and advocates for foster and adoptive children, youth and families by offering services and partnering with community and governmental agencies to develop healthy and self-sufficient individuals and families. The Resource Center can be contacted at 573.298.0258, ccfosteradopt@gmail.com, Address: PO Box 1505, Jefferson City, MO 65102, Physical Address: 1119 Jefferson St., Jefferson City, MO 65101. Hours are Mon.-Fri. from 8am - 5pm. www.ccfosteradopt.com

AWARDEE: State of Missouri and the Adoption Resource Centers win 2013 Adoption Excellence Award from the Children's Bureau in the business contributions/initiatives category for their groundbreaking adoption programs. Learn more about the Award and award winners at the Children's Bureau website: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/adoption-excellence-awards>

The Adoption Resource Centers of Missouri are brought to you in partnership with the Children's Division. Regional centers build on the community's current programs, allowing a wider variety of adoption-related services for you and your family. More information can be found by calling or viewing the Centers' websites.

Waiting Children: Seeking Forever Families

Meet Anthony & Cory

Anthony and Corey are brothers looking for a forever home. They love each other and consider each other very important in their life. Anthony says he is an “older brother and takes that role seriously.” When Corey was asked to draw something he likes, he drew a picture of him and his brother.

Anthony is 13 years old. He enjoys sports and being active in general. He hopes to live with someone who has a basketball hoop and a big backyard where he can play. He is outgoing and enjoys playing with other children. He is a natural leader and does well in school. Anthony likes to play video games too.

Corey is 12 years old. He likes watching television. He says he enjoys eating different food. Corey is described as calm and a little shy until he gets to know someone. He then warms up and likes to joke around. Corey, like his big brother, is good at sports. Corey also likes to help other people.

Contact Edna Green, 800.FOSTER.3 (800.367.8373) or ednagreen@foster-adopt.org, to learn more.



Life is better with kids around: The Adoption Exchange of Missouri

There are approximately 1,400 children in Missouri waiting to be adopted. Their ages vary and include:

- 5% 0-1 year
- 25% 1-5 years
- 20% 6-10 years
- 28% 11-15 years
- 18% 16-18 years
- 4% over 18 years

To meet Missouri's waiting children, please visit www.moheartgallery.org/gallery.



Meet Janiya

9-year-old Janiya is smart, sweet, and respectful. She likes being around people, laughing, and being herself. When she's not in class, Janiya is usually outside riding her bike, playing games, or having fun with friends. When she's indoors, Janiya loves cooking! Some of Janiya's favorite foods are pizza and ice cream.

Recently, Janiya had the opportunity to make pizza at California Pizza Kitchen. “I liked making pizza because I've never made it before,” she said. “If I could, I would like to open up my own pizza parlor one day and name it ‘Goodies!’” Janiya is happiest when she excels at something that she's worked hard to achieve.

Though natural intelligence helps her earn good grades, Janiya also knows she must study and be diligent when it comes to doing homework. “My favorite subject is math because I like to add and subtract,” she says. Janiya will gladly tell you why she enjoys school. “I like

school because I get to learn new stuff. I want to be a teacher when I grow up because I love kids.” Janiya also loves art class and PE. She's very proud of her good grades and has the report cards to prove it!

This sweet young lady has lived in foster care for almost four years. She tells us that when she's found a forever family, she “will be happy.” For more information on Janiya, contact Kristi Elliott at 314.535.7911 or email her at kristi.elliott@great-circle.org.

Family Connections
c/o The Coalition
1750 South Brentwood Blvd., Ste. 210
Saint Louis, Missouri 63144