

Family Connections

Volume 11, Issue 1 ~ Winter, 2012

In This Issue:

Foster Care & Adoption Advisory Board

- Page 2

Federal Adoption Tax Credit

- Page 3

Policy Updates

- Pages 4 - 5

Expert Exchange

- Pages 6 - 7

Missouri Diligent Recruitment

- Pages 8 - 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)

8 Steps to a Healthier Winter

You don't have to get sick each winter. A few simple steps can blow those bugs away and make you feel better in no time.

1. **Avoid the cold!** Stay indoors. Keep your hands away from your face and wash them often. Avoid people with colds, and ask your doctor if a vitamin C supplement may be helpful and safe for you.
2. **Feeling blue?** You could be someone who has Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). If you find yourself blue between October and March, it may be because of the lack of sunlight, which can be a natural antidepressant. Ask your doctor.
3. **Get a humidifier.** Cool winter air can be drying. It gives rise to colds and various types of allergies. It can damage paint and wooden furniture. You cannot control the humidity levels outside, but you can control the humidity indoors. Humidifiers allow you to moisturize your indoor atmosphere.
4. **Get a boost of energy.** Here are some ideas that are recommended by health professionals. Get out into the daylight at least 30 minutes a day, or put up those blinds. Exercise when possible, but never exercise when you have a temperature of 99.5 degrees F or above. Eat vegetables! B-vitamins, found in whole grains, green vegetables, potatoes, and beans, keep your immune system primed. Vitamins also help produce neurotransmitters in the brain, which moderate your mood. Make personal time for yourself. Splurge on a new journal or some new PJs to get you through the winter months.
5. **Make or buy a light box.** Use it in the morning. One to two hours every day.
6. There are over 200 viruses that cause the common cold. Talk with your doctor about what is "normal" and "not normal" for you. **Make a "cold plan."** If you get a cold, you will know how soon to call your doctor and what over the counter medications you can safely take. Talk to your doctor now about whether a flu shot is recommended.
7. **Chapped lips bothering you?** The Mayo Clinic recommends applying a moisturizer to your lips daily or as needed. You can use a lip balm or skin moisturizer. Generally, the greasier the products, the better. If all else fails, a humidifier in your home may help.
8. **Talk about how you feel.** Get advice from doctors, friends, and family.
9. **Get enough sleep.** Go to bed early so you can get up early and sunbathe in front of your lights.
10. **Don't make a New Year's resolution.** Or, if you do, keep it to yourself! That way, you won't feel any disappointment if you don't reach your goal. You don't have to change bad habits at the beginning of the year. You can do that every day of the year!



News You Can Use: Foster Care & Adoption Advisory Boards

Board Representatives

Northwest Region

- Rep 1: VACANT
- Rep 2: VACANT

Northeast Region

- **Suzie Forbis** 573.881.7339
srforbis@gmail.com
- **Ron Forbis** 573.881.7340
srforbis@gmail.com

Southeast Region

- **Kathryn Byington** 573.358.3736
ronbyington@gmail.com
- **Dawn Caruso** 573.803.8824
hallaroo4@cs.com

Southwest Region

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

Kansas City

- **Lois McDonald** 816.833.0785
mcdonald.lois@sbcglobal.net
- **Janet Richardson** 816.796.4497
jnrjrichardson@sbcglobal.net

St. Louis City

- **Sara Glasscock** 314.283.0214
somthindiff4ya@yahoo.com
- **Yvonne Peoples** 314.960.3873
yvonne.peoples@att.net

St. Louis County

- **Barbara Bocklage** 314.608.5580
stlbarbie@sbcglobal.net
- **Phyllis Hackman** 636.527.3255
ms.phack@yahoo.com

Foster Care Associations

Missouri Foster Care & Adoption Association

- **Melinda Nicholson** 417.766.5124
marvandmelinda@yahoo.com

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association

- **Lori Ross** 816.686.0463
ross600@aol.com

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition

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

Save the Date!

“All Together Now” Conference

Tan-Tar-A Resort / June 14 - 16, 2012

Join the Foster Care & Adoption Advisory Board for ONE Conference—Uniting Missouri's resource providers, professionals, and agencies for training, networking, and support opportunities.

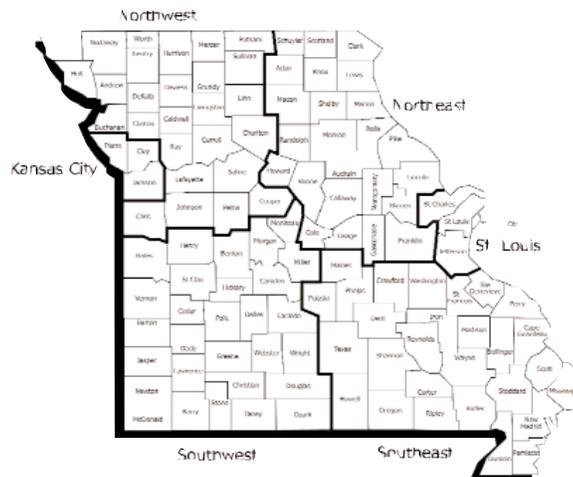
Participating agencies and organizations currently include Missouri Children's Division, Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association, and Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association.

If your agency would like to sign on as a Conference Partner, please contact Lori Ross lori@mfcfa.org or Melinda Nicholson at marvandmelinda@yahoo.com.

Workshop Proposals are now being accepted. Please request a workshop proposal from Heather Stidham and submit the requested form to back to her. Please mail forms to P.O. Box 186 Hermitage, MO 65668 or email to Heather.A.Stidham@dss.mo.gov by January 15, 2012.

Local and State Boards Working for You

The Children's Division supports foster parents through the ongoing work of the State Foster Care and Adoption Advisory Board. Each area/region holds local meetings quarterly and works to resolve issues of their area foster/adoptive parents. The Board consists of two parent representatives from each Regional board and three foster parent association representatives



Get Involved

Local Advisory Board:

Each local board operates within its own established bylaws. To find out more information about the work being done in your area, contact your parent representative or foster parent association listed to the left.

State Advisory Board:

Each area board is responsible for sending two parent representatives to the state meetings held quarterly in Jefferson City. Parent representatives are asked to make a two-year service commitment to the state board. If you are interested in representing your area, contact your parent representative listed in the column to the left.

Access to the Federal Adoption Tax Credit

Federal Adoption Tax Credit

Adoption Tax Credit Information provided by the North American Council on Adoptable Children

For more information, visit <http://www.nacac.org/taxcredit/taxcredit.html>.

For adoptions finalized in 2011, there is a federal adoption tax credit of up to \$13,360 per child. The 2011 adoption tax credit is refundable, which means taxpayers can typically get the credit refunded regardless of what they owe or paid in taxes for the year. Even people who have no income can qualify for a refundable credit. The credit is paid one time for each adopted child, and should be claimed when taxpayers file taxes for 2011.

To be eligible for the credit, parents must have adopted a child other than a stepchild and be within the income limits. How much of the credit parents can claim is affected by income. In 2011, families with a federal modified adjusted gross income below \$185,210 can claim the full credit. Those with incomes above \$225,210 cannot claim the credit; families with incomes between \$185,210 and \$225,210 can claim partial credit.

The Amount of Credit to Be Claimed

Families who finalize the adoption of a child with special needs in 2011 (see details below) can claim the full credit of \$13,360 whether or not they had any adoption expenses.

Example — A grandparent adopts three of her grandchildren from foster care and the state agency paid for all of the fees. However, all three children receive monthly adoption assistance benefits and thus are considered special needs. The grandmother earns less than \$185,210 so can claim the full credit of \$13,360 per child for a total of \$40,080.

Other adopters can claim a credit based on their qualified adoption expenses, which are the reasonable and necessary expenses paid to complete the adoption as long as those expenses are not reimbursed by anyone else. If the expenses are less than \$13,360, the adopters claim only the amount of the expenses. If expenses exceed \$13,360, the maximum credit to be claimed is \$13,360 per child.

When to Claim the Credit

Parents who adopt a child with special needs and are not basing their refund request on expenses claim the credit the year of finalization. Parents who adopt internationally also cannot claim the credit until the year of finalization. Parents who are adopting from the U.S. and claiming qualified adoption expenses can claim the credit either the year of finalization or the year after they spent the funds.

Example — A family begins the process of adopting a U.S. infant in 2010 and incurs \$7,000 in expenses that year plus \$4,000 in 2011, but will not finalize the adoption until 2012. In 2011, the parents can claim the \$7,000 for the 2010 expenses but not the \$4,000 spent in 2011. In 2012 when the adoption is final, the parent can claim the 2011 and 2012 expenses up to the maximum credit.

Qualifying as Special Needs

Families who adopted a child who has been determined to have special needs can claim the full credit of \$13,360 without having any adoption expenses. The credit for all other adopted children is based on the family's qualified adoption expenses. Just because a child has a disability does not mean they are considered special needs. For more on qualifying as special needs and claiming the credit, visit <http://www.nacac.org/taxcredit/taxcredit.html>.

Claiming the Credit

Taxpayers should review 2011 Form 8839 instructions (which will be issued by early 2012) very carefully to be sure that they apply for the credit correctly. In 2010, taxpayers were required to file taxes by mail rather than electronically and had to submit certain documentation with the return.

Families who incurred expenses are likely to be asked by the IRS to verify those expenses during the review process. Proof of expenses included copies of receipts, canceled checks, and credit card statements.

What If I Have Additional Questions?

If you have additional questions on the adoption tax credit, contact the North American Council on Adoptable Children at 651.644.3036 or taxcredit@nacac.org.



Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

"Missouri Reach" Tuition Waivers and Fee Program (CD11-78):

During the 2009 legislative session, the general assembly placed tuition and fee waivers into statute for certain foster care students per 173.270, RSMo. In the 2010 and 2011 legislative sessions, appropriations were provided to support the legislation. Effective with this memo, tuition waivers and fees will be available to eligible youth on a tiered priority basis. Priority will be given to:

- Those youth not otherwise eligible for Educational Training Vouchers.
- Students adopted from Children's Division after the age of 14.
- Those youth who have at least 60 hours of college credit.

In order to apply, youth must go to www.statevoucher.org and complete the online application.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-078.pdf>

Medicaid Coverage for Children in Foster Care (CD11-80):

The new policy will allow all foster children to have continuous medical coverage from the time they enter CD custody until jurisdiction is terminated, and the Alternative Care Client Information screen, SS-61, is closed in FACES. In addition, staff will no longer have to refer families to the Family Support Division (FSD) to apply for Medicaid until termination of jurisdiction is being considered.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-080.pdf>

The Importance of Father Engagement (CD11-81):

Responsibilities of staff when engaging fathers:

- Encourage custodial parents to be cooperative when it comes to involving the nonresident or non-custodial parent as appropriate in preserving the safety and best interest of their children;

- Encourage mothers to identify fathers early in the case;
- Complete a diligent search process as outlined in Section 4 Chapter 4 Attachment A, of the CWM;
- Maintain regular contact with all team members including the custodial, incarcerated, non-resident or non-custodial parent according to the case plan, informing them of significant changes in status of the case;
- Ensure that the child has planned regular contact with his/her father.
- Provide services directed to removal or reduction of any barriers to visitation;
- Assist in the connection of fathers and their children;
- Offer support or coaching before or during visits.
- Encourage incarcerated fathers to participate in services such as: Inside-Out Dads, Parents As Teachers, Story Link, Building Strong Relationships, or Parent Link;
- Fathers are to be encouraged to write letters, send pictures, cards, make phone calls and give the worker details of how to visit them if appropriate;
- Staff should utilize the CS-2A, Incarcerated Parent's Child Status Report.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-081.pdf>

Revised Policy, Procedure and Tools Related to Child Safety Assessment and Safety Planning (CD11-86):

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce staff to revised safety assessment and safety planning policy, procedure, and tools. This memo will introduce the tools and policy, and will also describe the necessary adjustments that must be made for FACES entry.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-086.pdf>

Elevated Medical Foster Care Resource Home Capacity (CD11-87):

Elevated Medical Needs placement types are restrictive in capacity as are all elevated needs resource homes. Elevated medical needs resource homes total capacity is four. Only two elevated needs placements may be placed in a home simultaneously.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-087.pdf>

Clarifications of Relative or Kinship Policy (CD11-88):

Relative homes, RH, may use the relative non-safety standard waiver and not complete the 30 hours in-service training for their RH license to be renewed. However, if they do not complete the required 30 hours of training, they are not eligible for the \$100.00 Professional Parenting Payment.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-088.pdf>

Changes to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (CD11-92):

The purpose of this memo is to introduce changes to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. Regulations 2, 3, and 7 were adopted at the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children effective October 1, 2011.

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-092.pdf>

Legal Guardianship Agreement (CDSG) Update (CD11-96):

Nonrecurring legal expenses directly related to the child's legal guardianship are not to exceed a maximum amount of \$2000 as determined by the Division's policy or any duly promulgated state regulations, as set forth in this Agreement. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-096.pdf>

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/2011.

Capitol Ideas: Your Policy Update

Introduction of Intensive Community Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (AKA Inpatient Diversion Program (CD11-103):

This Inpatient Diversion program will provide a comprehensive array of mental health services to a small population of youth whose mental health needs cannot be met in a home-like or community-based setting. No more than 15 children will be enrolled at any given time unless otherwise approved by the Division Director or their designee. These services will be provided in a secure 24-hour service environment with a child and adolescent psychiatrist supervising the care provided by a multi-disciplinary team. The goal of the treatment is to manage the mental health crisis and restore the child to his/her previous level of functioning. One staff member will be available for every two youth enrolled in the program during waking hours. <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2011/cd11-103.pdf>

New Toolkit Explores the Kinship Provisions of the Fostering Connections Act

A new web-based toolkit from the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections provides information and resources related to the kinship care practices addressed in the Fostering Connections Act: notice to relatives, foster care licensing standards, placement with siblings, and family connections grants.

View the toolkit at <http://www.nrcpfc.org/toolkit/kinship/>



Paying for College... Student Resource Guide 2011-2012

Need help paying for college? Here's a resource that can help! Resources include scholarships, internships, fellowships, resource books, and websites. To view the Guide, visit http://roybal-allard.house.gov/UploadedFiles/Scholarship_Guide_2011-2012.pdf

Wendy's Wonderful Kids Evaluation Results are Great!

In 2010, more than 107,000 children in foster care were waiting to be adopted. Ultimately, less than half were adopted, and they tended to be, primarily, the very young children under the age of 12. Older children and those with special needs were less likely to be adopted. A five-year evaluation, led by Child Trends, found children served by a child-focused recruitment model experienced substantially higher rates of adoption than children not served by this model, and that the approach is even more effective for older and special needs children. The child-focused recruitment model is used by DTFA's signature program, Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK), which provides local adoption agencies with grants to hire dedicated adoption recruiters who spend 100 percent of their job focused on finding waiting children forever homes. To read any of the five reports, written by Child Trends, describing different aspects of the evaluation, visit www.davethomasfoundation.org.

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is a national nonprofit public charity dedicated to dramatically increasing the adoptions of the more than 137,000 children waiting in North America's foster care systems. Created by Wendy's founder Dave Thomas, who was adopted, the Foundation implements results-driven national signature programs, foster care adoption awareness initiatives and research-based advocacy efforts. To learn more, visit davethomasfoundation.org.

Expert Exchange: Professional Answers to Your Questions

Parents Ask:

How can we raise our adoptive child with healthy self-esteem? He's fragile.

It isn't easy. He may be fragile, quick to doubt himself and suffering because he's been wounded by his previous experiences. Keep that in mind. Foster and adopted children can be at-risk because they may have suffered huge losses or been abused or neglected. They may also have disabilities or special needs. Any of these traumas make it harder for a child to feel positive about himself.

Parents who want to raise a well-rounded, durable, confident adopted child with healthy self-esteem face real challenges. It's difficult enough to raise any child with high self-esteem, much less a child with additional issues. But it's so important. People who believe in themselves, enjoy strong family support, and are competent are much more likely to succeed in life, have healthy relationships, and be happier.

These strategies will help.

Acknowledge the real challenges you and your child face. If your child has suffered some of these assaults to his self-esteem, admit it and discuss it. Being in denial or minimizing the challenges will make you much less effective helping your child overcome the very real barriers he faces to feeling confident, competent, and lovable. Admitting the extent of the challenges you, your spouse, and your child face is the first step toward handling them successfully. Remind yourself frequently that success is difficult but not impossible.

Assess your child's situation.

Judging by his behavior and what he says, how does he feel about himself? How realistic are his expectations? How does he perform academically? How does he feel

about it? How does he interact with peers? Has he learned to cooperate? Does he have friends? Close friends? How frequently does he invite them over to play? Do they reach out to him? Is he willing to do what others want to do, or does he try to impose her own agenda? What do his teachers say about his relationships with others?

Acknowledge the challenges. Identify realistic expectations. Assess strategies and progress.

Identify your expectations and values.

Are you as aware as you should be of the importance of helping your child grow emotionally and socially as well as achieve academically up to his abilities? Are your expectations realistic? Do you sometimes get too caught up in what your child can accomplish and lose sight of her development as a well-rounded person? If so, your well-intended, though misguided, emphasis on achievements at the expense of overall personal development can make it harder for your child to feel good about himself. Are your expectations too low? Do you expect too little because he has been hurt? Some parents "love too much" by lowering legitimate expectations. This approach undermines a child's confidence in his ability to achieve and his willingness to make efforts that lead to success.

Assess your parenting approach, its effectiveness, and how to improve. What are your developmental goals for your child? How can you help him achieve them? What are the next steps? What kind of coaching and support does he need from you? Do you help him set realistic goals and plans to pursue them?

Do you help your child feel secure and confident by establishing predictable family structures and expectations? Does he respect them? Do you reinforce them? Does he know when to get up, prepare for school, and do homework when he returns? Does he know the family schedule for meals, chores and other activities? Do you stick to the schedule and expect all family members to cooperate?

How have you tried to parent? Do you sometimes show your disappointment when your child fails to do as well as you had hoped? How reasonable are your academic expectations? Are you when your child might be silently disappointed in himself? Do you acknowledge this and help him put it into words before you reassure him?

Do you reassure and praise frequently? When praising, do you focus on the process and your child's efforts, not the outcomes? Is your praise specific so that it reinforces the behavior you value? For example, instead of saying, "Thanks for helping," it's more effective to say, "I really like the way you cleaned the table and got the dishes started without being asked."

Make your priorities clear. Encourage and praise his efforts. Get help if you

Agree on your priorities with your spouse.

If you expect your child to take you seriously, you both must share the same values, agree on the current priorities for your child's personal growth and pursue the same strategies. Focus especially on the positive character traits you want to nurture in your child, such as risk-taking, persistence and generosity of spirit with others.

Make your priorities clear to your

Resources for Parents & Professionals

child. Let your child know how important it is to get along with others, achieve in school and feel confident about herself. Stress realistic academic expectations that take account of her ability, background and experiences. Encourage her to respect others, listen to what they say, compromise and cooperate. Discuss the social aspects of her day at school: Who did she spend time with? What did they do? How did she handle herself? Coach when you need to. Children who have friends and who know how to get along with others tend to feel better about themselves and are more likely to interact positively with others throughout their lives.

Involve your child in extracurricular activities that foster cooperation and teamwork such as sports, drama or Scouting. Children who isolate themselves for various reasons, including lack of self-confidence, may fail to develop the social and communication skills necessary for emotionally satisfying relationships with peers.

Encourage your child to become involved in rewarding activities where she will probably not excel. Let her know this in advance and explain why it's important. This will help her learn that she is OK as a person, valued and lovable just for being who she is. To be resilient, children need to learn to try things, enjoy activities without measuring the results and continue despite frustrations.

Should you force your child to participate in experiences that promote personal growth? Yes, if you must. Obviously it is better if she participates in activities that interest her, but sometimes a child who fears "not-being-good-enough" in these activities must be compelled to participate. "I want you to try soccer now. If you really don't like it at the end of the season, you can switch to

swimming, dance or theater," you could say. Activities like these help your child become more well-rounded and persistent.

Praise your child for participating, not for excelling. This is extremely important. Most children experience frustration and failure repeatedly in the normal flow of their lives. With support from nurturing adults, learn to cope with it. They learn to persist. That's important for all children, most especially for those whose self-esteem may have been wounded by being abandoned by their birthparents-for whatever reasons, however valid. Learning to overcome frustration and disappointment helps children develop resilience in the face of adversity.

Don't hesitate to get professional help for you or your child if necessary. Many children, especially teens, benefit from individual or group counseling. Don't hesitate to explore that those options if your teen has some emotional issues and seems willing to deal with them. Coaching by a knowledgeable professional could also help you improve your parenting skills and strategies.

Finally, remind your child that your love is not conditional.

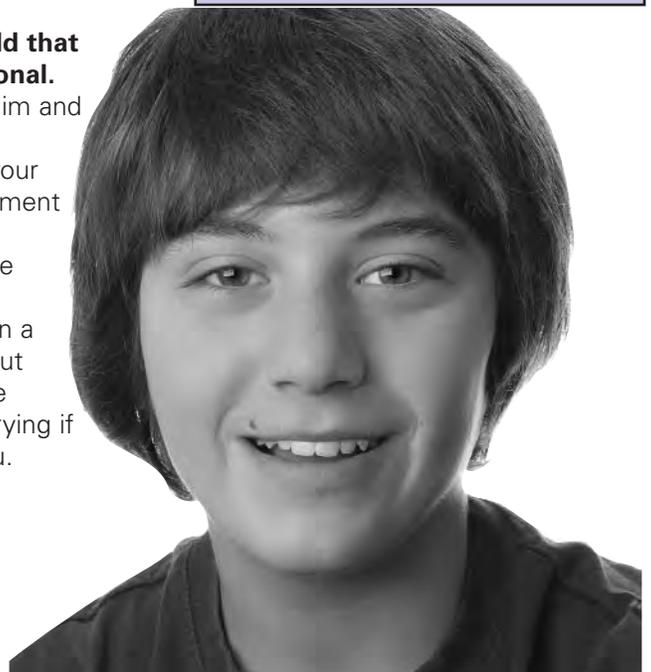
You love him, believe in him and stick with him through adversity because he is your child for life. Your commitment to him is not contingent on what he achieves. If he feels confident of your commitment, he will be in a much better position to put energies into constructive behaviors instead of worrying if he's good enough for you.



Dennis O'Brien is a licensed clinical social worker, experienced educator and therapist. In addition to writing educational materials used by the Washington University School of Medicine Dept. of Psychiatry, he writes weekly columns on parenting for the Suburban Journals, monthly columns for Savvyfamily, and occasional columns for CHARACTERplus, Gifted Resource Council, Gifted Association of Missouri and other publications. O'Brien's April 6 column, "Prevent teen suicide by addressing it," won the 2010 Missouri Institute of Mental Health award for outstanding reporting on suicide.

Do you have a question for our Experts or a topic you would like to see addressed in the next issue?

If so, please contact
Jessi Brawley at
800.FOSTER.3.



Missouri Diligent Recruitment

Missouri Diligent Recruitment

For children growing up in the foster care system, the stability and security of knowing they have a family to count on is missing. Through an Adoption Opportunities grant, the Children's Division of Missouri and partner organizations have joined together to initiate a creative new approach based on experience, knowledge and a commitment to making the lives of Missouri's foster children better. It is the partnership's mission to bring together potential families and child welfare professionals to find permanent connections for children with caring adults.

The grant calls for youth to be randomly selected from the population managed by the Children's Division and their Contracted Case Managers in St. Louis City and County, Jefferson and St. Charles Counties. The youth are then assigned into a control group (services as usual) or an intervention group (Extreme Recruitment). Extreme Recruitment is an intensive 12-20 week process to find homes for hard to place children and prepare them and their family for adoption or guardianship.

Recently, the Children's Division supported an expansion of Extreme Recruitment in the Kansas City area. The youth below are a few participants in Extreme Recruitment who are still looking for their permanent home. If you would like to learn more about any of the youth, contact For more information on the Diligent Recruitment project, visit www.modiligentrecruitment.org. Questions regarding Extreme Recruitment can be directed to Denise Kelley, Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition, at 800.FOSTER.3 or denisekelley@foster-adopt.org.



Meet Ashley, age 15

Ashley cares about others and is a people pleaser. She describes herself as "beautiful, talented, caring, and helpful." Ashley is very kind-hearted and loves animals. When she grows up, she wants to become a veterinarian so she can help them. Ashley also enjoys writing.

Ashley loves to spend her time cheerleading and being with her best friends. Her sweet disposition and glowing smile lights up any room. The perfect family for Ashley would be one who could help guide her through high school and into adulthood. Ashley would love to be part of a committed family. *Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.*



Meet Romeo, age 11 and Tori, age 14

Vi-Torian "Tori" is an outgoing, adventurous young lady with a great heart. She loves writing poems and song lyrics. Romeo is "a pleaser," says his foster mother. He does nice things for others just "because." Romeo loves playing football and basketball. Romeo also likes drawing, playing outside, riding his bike, and reading. Romeo is proud of himself for obtaining the highest level of reading in his class. These siblings love one another very much. Tori says her brother is "smart." Romeo says that his sister is "pretty, sweet, nice, and smart." *Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.*



Meet Timmy, age 12

Timmy is fun, social, and thrives when interacting with others. He's a sweet and playful boy who enjoys being outdoors, listening to music, and singing songs. Though Timmy faces some physical disabilities and sometimes uses a wheelchair, nothing stops this active and playful boy. Timmy does well in school and loves his teacher. He is very inquisitive and likes learning new things. The perfect family for Timmy would help him maintain contact with his sister and be able to provide one-on-one support for his daily care and emotional needs. But most of all, they would love him unconditionally. *Photo courtesy of Hastings' Creative Images Inc.*

To learn more about other youth involved in Extreme Recruitment, please contact Denise Kelley at denisekelley@foster-adopt.org or 800.FOSTER.3.

Missouri Diligent Recruitment



Meet Melinda, age 18

Melinda dreams of finding a forever family and growing up to become a preschool teacher or a chef – maybe both! She enjoys being around kids and would love to teach them to be good people. Melinda says, “I’ve always wanted to be a cheerleader even when I was younger.” She’s outgoing, kind, and generous. Melinda likes to read and excels in her French class. Melinda also enjoys running track and hopes to make the cheerleading team! *Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.*



Meet Uniqua, Octavia, Queen, Lamont, and Albert

This “fabulous five” are very close and are happiest when they are together. Uniqua (age 12, pictured left) is the oldest and is a natural leader. Uniqua loves school and is proud of her good grades. Fun-loving and energetic, Uniqua enjoys double-dutch, video games, singing, and dancing. When asked what was special about her, Uniqua said that it would be her love for her brothers and sisters. Octavia (age 10, pictured far right) is friendly and easygoing. Octavia is a good student like her big sister. Octavia likes to play video games and watch *Sponge Bob Square Pants*. Most of all, Octavia enjoys designing clothes. She spends a lot of time working on her creations and has already filled several sketch pads with her designs. Octavia is very inquisitive, and always eager to learn new things. Queen (pictured middle) is nearly 8 years old and is bubbly and outgoing. Talkative and kind, Queen is a diligent student and enjoys going to school. She likes being outside riding her bike and playing with her friends. Lamont (pictured far, left) is almost 5 years old. He likes to smile and laugh, and is always ready for fun. Lamont looks forward to going to day care. His favorite activities are playing with toy cars and trucks. Although 3-year-old Albert (pictured front row, right) is the baby of the family, he can definitely hold his own! Well-mannered and helpful, Albert spends lots of time playing cars and trucks with Lamont.



Meet Courtney, age 17

Outgoing and friendly, Courtney always sees the positive side of life. She is at the top of her class in school and has recently developed her artistic side with a ceramics class. happiest at school and earns top grades. An athlete, Courtney enjoys running and plans to join the track team. Courtney dreams of going to Mizzou and becoming a police officer with the K9 Unit. *Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.*

Meet Brandon, 16

Brandon is a youth that enjoys creating imaginative things with his hands. Brandon enjoys taking things apart and putting them back together. Brandon loves the outdoors. The exploration spirit in him seeks out the animals in the woods, turtles, deer, and snakes. Brandon takes pleasure in working in the open air raking leaves, using the leaf blower, flexing his muscles when helping chop wood, or hanging Christmas decorations. Brandon is friendly and funny once he gets to know you, and he looks at life from a creative, and unique viewpoint. Brandon is ready for a family to provide him with a structured and supportive environment. *Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.*



Foster and Adoption Resource Center

Eastern MO ARC

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition
1750 S. Brentwood Blvd., Ste. 210, Brentwood, MO 63144
800.FOSTER.3 (314.367.8373) / www.foster-adopt.org

Career Planning, Finding a Job, Interview Skills, and More! FREE Workshops for Foster Youth

These amazing workshops are open to all foster and adopted youth ages 15 to 20. Teens will learn important skills, including: how to find a job, interview skills, educational/career planning, creating a personal budget, and saving money. Registration is required. Register by calling Nickie at 314.367.8373.

24-Hour Crisis Intervention is Expanding to Jefferson County and St. Louis City!

The holiday season can bring with it a great deal of stress. Crisis often erupts. Let us help you with our 24-Hour Crisis Intervention services. Thanks to a generous gift from the Lutheran Foundation, beginning in January, the Coalition will start helping families with children ages 3 to 19 years old in Jefferson County and St. Louis City through Crisis Intervention. The same eligibility requirements apply for these families as they do for St. Louis County families already being served through a grant from the Children's Service Fund. Click here for details. We have openings now for St. Louis County. For immediate assistance, call 314.614.2342. Crisis Intervention is FREE for pre- and post- guardianship/adoptive families in St. Louis County, St. Louis City, and Jefferson County.



Support Groups FREE to Foster and Adoptive Parents and Older Youth

Any parent will tell you that foster care and adoption takes more than love, it takes skills, too! The Coalition offers a variety of skill-building support groups. They are all held at the Foster & Adoption Resource Center (1750 South Brentwood Boulevard, Suite 210, St. Louis, MO 63144). Call Nickie Steinhoff, Director of Training & Community Support at 314.367.8373 or visit www.foster-adopt.org and click on "For Parents" for more information and to see upcoming dates for Support Groups.

For more information on any of our our programs, please visit www.foster-adopt.org, or call 800.367.8373.

Western MO ARC

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association (MFCAA)
3210 S Lee's Summit Rd., Independence, MO 64055
816.350.0215 / www.mfcaa.org

2011 was a whirlwind year of growth and progress for the Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association. As we begin a new year, we reflecting on what we've accomplished in 2011, and plan for another year of incredible positive movement in 2012!

In 2011, we grew our licensing program. We've helped to recruit, train, support and retain dozens of foster families. We've seen 30 children adopted by families we've developed in 2011, and we know we'll increase that number in 2012. Additionally, we've retained more than 95% of the foster homes we've licensed, an outcome that we're very proud of.

We believe that we provide excellent service to our foster and adoptive families (they tell us we do), and our goal is to continue to expand the pool of qualified loving families available for Kansas City area kids as we move into 2012. We've added an exciting new program to help the kids most at risk of aging out of foster care with negative outcomes. Extreme Recruitment uses an innovative approach to exploring a child's background and extended family in order to identify healthy members of the family who can provide the child with connections and, in most cases, with permanency that would otherwise have been out of reach. Our new private detective, John Ecklund, and recruiter, Marcella Gladney-Lee, are hard at work finding permanent families for youth in foster care. We can't wait to report on the amazing outcomes that I'm sure we'll find for the kids lucky enough to be chosen for this program.

Our work in providing **post adoptive services** expanded in 2011. With additional funding, we've tackled the respite challenge from a new direction. We were able to provide small grants to six support organizations across Missouri so that they could provide a group respite activity to benefit their local foster and adoptive families. These events served **429 kids and 178 families**.

Our fall conference this year, in partnership with Cornerstones of Care, UMKC School of Social Work and the Children's Division is going to be the biggest conference we've ever hosted with more than 400 people in attendance. We're thrilled that several new families and many child welfare workers will benefit from the incredible learning opportunity afforded by this event.

Read more at:

<http://www.mfcaa.org/img/files/newsletters/2011/December%202011.pdf>.

Waiting Children: Seeking Forever Families



Meet Devinera

Devinera (13) is sweet young lady with brown eyes and brown hair that is kept short. She is a very soft spoken sweet child who loves the Disney Princesses and the Disney Channel.

Due to her medical condition, Devinera is unable to walk. She spends most of her time at rest or in a wheelchair. Devinera does have medical issues that will need to be addressed regularly. She will need to be in a loving, supportive home that will provide her with the medical attention that she needs.

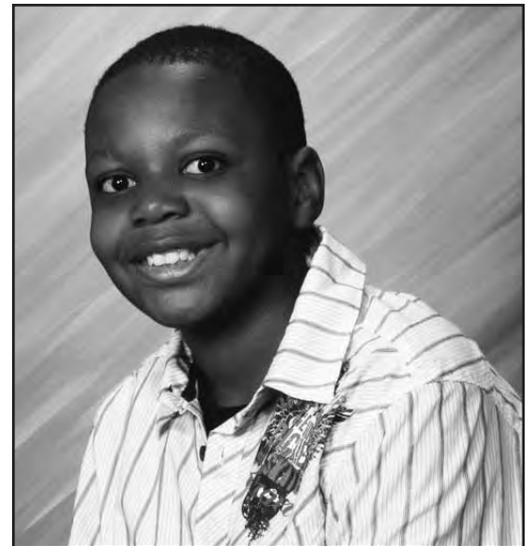
For more information on Devinera please contact Amber Killingsworth, Adoption Specialist, at 816.889.2837 or amber.j.killingsworth@dss.mo.gov.

Meet William

William (11) is a delightful boy who wants very much to have a forever family. He needs a committed family who can provide structure, discipline, and can give him the love and consistency he needs. In his free time, William likes to play sports and video games. He enjoys basketball and going out to eat. He loves to go to Six Flags and attend sporting events. William describes himself as smart and funny. He says that some of the things others like about him are his sense of humor, kindness, and that he's very loveable.

In school, William's favorite subjects are social studies and spelling. He dreams about being a football or basketball player when he grows up. If he could change one thing about the world, William says he would make it "more peaceful."

For more information on William, please contact Dawn Phillips at 573.431.6592 or dawn.phillips@dss.mo.gov. *Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.*



Meet Amber

Amber (13) is a loving child who cares a great deal for others. Her teacher says she is a delight to have in class. She gets good grades by working diligently and focusing on her school work before playing. She's very proud of her grades – and rightly so! Amber also enjoys making many new friends at school.

At home, Amber is very helpful, and helps out around the house. Amber enjoys rollerblading, computer games, basketball, fishing, camping, horseback riding, board games, and reading. She especially loves animals. "I want to live on a farm with tons of cats and horses," she says. She longs for the consistency and love that a forever family would provide. For more information on Amber, please call 314.367.8373. *Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.*

For more information about Amber, please contact Amanda Guerdat, at 618.394.5900 x273 or amandag@cssil.org.

Photo courtesy of Sears Portrait Studio.

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