



FAPAC-FOSTER & ADOPTIVE PARENT ADVOCACY CENTER

advocacy news

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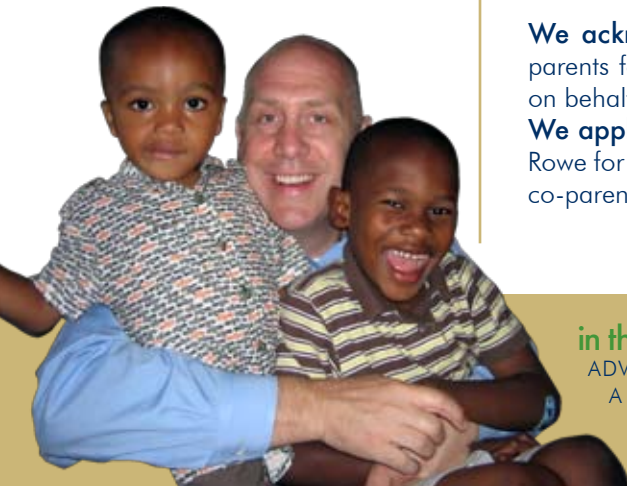
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happy 10th anniversary FAPAC!

Improving the lives of children from the DC foster care system by:

- Training and empowering foster, kinship and adoptive parents to be strong advocates for children in their homes
- Advocating for inclusion and improved delivery of services and supports
- Building bridges between foster parents and birth parents, social workers, and agencies
- Developing coalitions and partnerships to best serve the District's families

FAPAC is proud to announce our 10-year anniversary of helping children and families of the District of Columbia foster care system. Founded in October 2000 to ensure inclusion of foster, kinship, and adoptive parent voices, FAPAC has grown to be a substantial grassroots force, a strong organizational partner,

and an outspoken voice for systemic change within the DC child welfare system and other systems that serve our children.

During this significant time, we also bid good-bye to our offices on Rhode Island Avenue. We appreciate Catholic Charities for being such a wonderful landlord for the past years, and specifically wish to thank Malaika Thomas and Deborah Charles for their assistance while we were their tenants.

We are excited about working in our new space, located on the third floor of the The National Children's Center (NCC) at 6200 Second Street, NW 20011. Our phone number remains the same.

kudos & thumbs up

(for more on these issues, please see "advocacy update", page 2)

We acknowledge: Birth parents and foster parents forging the path of working together on behalf of their children.

We applaud: Patricia Gamble and Meredith Rowe for their successful modeling of a strong co-parenting relationship.

We acknowledge: The successful first year of the CFSA Ombudsman's office.

We applaud: Jenna Beebe, CFSA Ombudsman and Special Assistant to the Director.

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advocacy update

FOSTER PARENT/BIRTH PARENT PARTNERSHIP:

In the past two years, FAPAC has been working with a small group of foster and birth parents to identify ways to build stronger co-parenting relationships to better support children. In partnership with the Parent Advocate Project (PAP), we have been hosting small dialogue groups, as well as bringing people together for training. In the process of doing this work, we discovered that Patricia Gamble and Meredith Rowe worked together on their own to build a mutually supportive relationship that resulted in a successful reunification of Patricia's child back into her home. FAPAC applauds Patricia and Meredith for their courageous work together.

Foster parents who are interested in begin involved in this critically important work please call Margie at FAPAC at 202 269-9441.

CFSA OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN: IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

Under the leadership of Jenna Beebe, Ombudsman and Special Assistant to the Director, the Ombudsman's office is now completing its first half year as the office at CFSA that addresses concerns from birth families, foster families, kinship families, youth and others in the community that cannot be addressed by the normal CFSA or private agency chain of command. FAPAC was instrumental in advocating for the creation of the CFSA Office of the Ombudsman. We want to acknowledge the successful development of this new position and Dr. Roque Gerald for his support and his choice of Jenna to serve in this capacity. FAPAC

need training?

For foster parent training dates and topics, don't forget to check out the calendar at www.dcrptc.org, a calendar of trainings for foster, kinship and adoptive parents offered by both public and private agencies. This website is sponsored by the Resource Parent Training Coalition, a public-private partnership of DC organizations and agencies.

Additionally, CFSA has recently developed a new Child Welfare Training Academy (CWTA) to provide resource parents and staff with a knowledge base and a professional level of parenting skills that support the Agency's mission to promote safety, well-being and permanency for children and families. CWTA training adheres to the basic tenets of the Agency's Practice Model, including a child-centered, family-focused, and strength-based approach to care.

Five essential areas of in-depth child welfare study are provided to every CWTA student:

- Protecting and nurturing children and teens.
- Meeting developmental needs and addressing developmental delays.
- Supporting relationships between children and their families.
- Connecting children to safe nurturing life-long relationships.
- Working as a member of a professional team.

was never in doubt that there was a critical need for this type of internal trouble-shooting process. We applaud Jenna for keeping up with the high and growing number of calls, the manner in which she is willing to provide a neutral review of agency decisions, and the integrity with which she has approached this work. Thank you Jenna!

IMPORTANT NEW LEGISLATION.

This past Spring, the Council of the District of Columbia passed what is known as the "Adoption Omnibus Bill." This legislation expands guardianship and adoption subsidies until youth turn 21. The law impacts guardianships and adoptions going forward as of May 10, 2010, and is not retroactive to those that have already occurred. The legislation also expands the definition of those eligible to apply to become subsidized guardians. Previously, this was an opportunity open only to "Kin or Godparents." The new legislation allows foster parents to become subsidized guardians. This provision is particularly important to older youth in foster care who want to stay in their foster families, but do not want to be adopted because it would sever legal ties to their birth families.

This legislation also has a component called "Post Adoption Contact Agreements" giving adoptive parents and birth parents the opportunity to enter into agreements about post adoption contact; i.e. visitation, etc. for birth parents. These agreements are voluntary, and adoptive parents do not have to agree to sign one. However, once the agreement is made, it would be court enforceable. Although FAPAC supports adoptive parents and birth parents coming together when

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

In addition, they have incorporated "cross-training" opportunities for resource parents and staff to jointly participate and "co-present" during class sessions. This approach to training increases effective communication and cooperation among resource parents and staff while it reinforces the importance of teaming as an essential component of successful permanency outcomes.

CFSA trainings will be listed on the Training Coalition website. If you prefer a print copy of their training schedule, call the CFSA foster parent training line at 202-727-5329.

hot/unresolved issues

- Support and specific training for foster parents of older youth including recognition of the impact on foster parent employment when youth are frequently suspended.
- Support for CFSA's Maryland families.
- Consistent process for children to be assessed for therapeutic status.
- Meaningful disruption prevention services.
- Consistent distribution and appropriate implementation of placement information packages.



a tribute to Valli Matthews, beloved friend and board member



FAPAC mourns the loss of Valli Matthews, well-loved colleague and former FAPAC board member. Although Valli's most recent professional years were spent working at Catholic Charities outside of foster care, she had deep and long-lasting impact on the District's delivery of foster care services. As administrator and premier foster parent trainer at For Love of Children (FLOC) for many years, Valli was instrumental in training many prospective foster parents and helping

to support and advise many child welfare social workers who now carry on her work.

FAPAC Director Margie Chalofsky tributes Valli with being her motivation to become a foster parent, her support to become an adoptive parent, and her inspiration to become a foster parent advocate in the District foster care system. Valli also trained other members of the FAPAC board when they became foster parents many years ago. With the acknowledgement that FAPAC grew out of seeds Valli planted, Valli was asked to serve on our board of directors, which she did for a short while before she became too sick to attend. Even when the time came when she was too sick to serve, Valli asked about what she could do to help.

Valli had a unique way of turning colleagues into friends; her enthusiasm, energy, and compassion will be deeply missed. We will always remember the significant impact she had on those of us carrying on this work, and her commitment lives on in us all.

FAPAC's facelift

At this fitting time of our anniversary and our transition, we are pleased to release our updated newsletter design and our new logo. Our new newsletter format has been designed by J.A. Creative and our new logo by Dylan Mills of DBM Design. Our new logo and newsletter continue to reinforce our commitment to Advocacy, Inclusion and Empowerment. FAPAC owes deep

gratitude and appreciation to Melissa Barringer, adoptive parent and extraordinary FAPAC volunteer and friend, who has been our newsletter editor for many years and now passes that torch to J.A. Creative. Melissa will continue to be an essential member of the FAPAC family and will stay involved in our work in other capacities and roles.

CFSA news

1. TEAMING

CFSA's new practice model includes a focus on teaming. Your child's social worker should be contacting you to join into team meetings and decision-making. If you are not being contacted, and decisions are being made for the children in your home without your input, please call the social worker and ask about how to get more involved. If you don't get results, you can go up the social worker's chain of command. If that is still not successful, you can contact Jenna Beebe, CFSA Ombudsman, at 202-727-7040 or email her at Jenna.Beebe@dc.gov and request her intervention on your behalf.

2. RESTRUCTURED ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCESS

CFSA Office of Administrative Review is now called The Office of Structured Progress Reviews. Foster parents should still receive notification of and invitation to these reviews. Structured Progress Reviews (SPR), will be held every six months for all children in CFSA care and custody except: those who have a goal of adoption and have been in a pre-adoptive home for less than nine months and those youth who are ages 17-21. Those children

will be reviewed by other case review processes, in which foster parents should also be included.

3. NURSE CARE MANAGER MODEL

CFSA is working to take a more consistent, coordinated, and comprehensive approach to the health care needs of children in care. The Nurse Care Manager (NCM) program is the mechanism for integrating health and social services planning in a way that enhances health outcomes, well-being, and permanence.

Registered nurses are staffing the NCM program to ensure kids in care get quality health care services. NCMs will serve in a supportive and complementary, but distinctly different, role for social workers, helping them access and coordinate health services in support of permanency planning for children. In this role, the NCM provides administrative health expertise, not social work functions. The NCM serves as the skilled, professional medical representative to ensure that health care needs of the child are coordinated, provided, and monitored in a timely fashion. This program went "live" July 1, 2010.



other news

The Weekend Miracles Program, formerly of Kidsave, has launched as an independent organization that will continue to recruit "host families" for older teens seeking adoption. Under the leadership of Susan Punnett, Weekend Miracles will be a program under a new organization known as the Family and Youth Initiative. We wish Susan the best of luck in her new venture. Anyone interested in learning more about this program, please contact Susan at SusanP@dcfyi.org.



FAPAC chosen for 2010 - 11 Catalogue for Philanthropy: Greater Washington

FAPAC is proud to announce that it has been featured in the 2010 - 2011 Catalogue for Philanthropy: Greater Washington. FAPAC was one of 70 outstanding nonprofit organizations to be selected from a field of 250 applicants for the honor.

Nonprofits are chosen based on excellence, cost-effectiveness, and impact. A panel of 100 expert reviewers from foundations, corporate giving programs, and the nonprofit sector evaluated the applications.

Now in its eighth year, the Catalogue's mission is to generate visibility and resources for the best community-based nonprofits, and to create more meaningful experiences for donors. According to Barbara Harman, President and Editor of the Catalogue for Philanthropy: Greater Washington, "We know that nonprofits have had another very difficult year, and the economy continues to create challenges: dollars are down and need is up. Individual donors can continue to make a real difference -- as they did last year -- keeping great organizations afloat during these tough times."



FAPAC thanks the Catalogue for this honor and support of our work. To request a copy of the Catalogue, visit www.catalogue-forphilanthropy-dc.org and click on "request a catalogue" at the bottom of the page.

advocacy update (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2) appropriate to work out post adoption contact arrangements, we joined others in taking a strong but unsuccessful stand against it being legislated and court enforceable. For more information on these contracts, parents can call Children's Law Center at 202 467-4900 ext. #4; or talk to your own adoption attorney.

ADOPTION SUBSIDY POLICY:

CFSA has announced that the adoption subsidy policy has been amended, and that age is no longer a criteria by itself. The new policy states:

The child is eligible for subsidy when the child is determined to have special needs based on one or more of the following conditions:

- The child has a chronic medically diagnosed disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or requires professional treatment, or assistance in self-care; or
- The child has been diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional to have a psychiatric condition which impairs the child's mental, intellectual, or social functioning, and for which the child requires professional services; or The child has been determined to be mentally disabled by a qualified medical professional; or
- The child has been diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional to have a behavioral or emotional disorder characterized by situationally inappropriate behavior which deviates substantially from behavior appropriate to the child's age and interferes significantly with the child's intellectual, social, and personal adjustment; or The child meets all medical or disability requirements of Title XVI of the Social Security Act with respect to eligibility for supplemental security income benefits; or
- The child is a member of a sibling group, in which the siblings should be placed together and the adoptions must be finalized at the same time; or
- The child is of an age or has an ethnic or racial background which presents a barrier to adoption; or
- The child has been legally free for adoption for six (6) months or more and an adoptive placement has not been found.

FAPAC recommends that for any questions about subsidy pre-adoptive parents consult their attorney.

GENERAL ADVOCACY GUIDANCE FROM FAPAC STAFF:

FAPAC has been working for 10 years to support and assist families. At this time we want to give one piece of critical advice to families. When dealing with an issue, concern, question, remember to write down the names of everyone you talked to!. When families call us, it is difficult to unravel actions and decisions if you cannot remember who gave you specific answers or information. For your own benefit and the benefit of anyone trying to help you, keep that pad with you at all times; get names and write them down!!

important date

FAPAC's Valentine's Day Concert and Dinner: Join us for FAPAC's second annual Valentine's Day concert, dinner and silent auction, featuring our own beloved Marilyn Egerton and her fabulous band. For more information see enclosed flyer.