



# The Fostering Connection

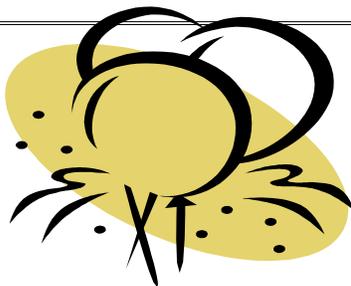
A quarterly publication from the **Onondaga County Foster/Adoptive Parent Support Group**

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## It's a Celebration!

With this newsletter, we celebrate our one-year anniversary of bringing you a quarterly newsletter. At the same time, we celebrate two years of a parent run foster/adoptive parent support group here in Onondaga County. In this time span we have accomplished more than that small group of foster parents, who met together for the first time in March of 2003, ever imagined possible. We have bimonthly meetings during the school year, a newsletter, a website under construction, plans for our first summer picnic, success in obtaining a grant, incorporation and thanks to Cathy Dutton in home finding, a way to send email messages to foster/adoptive homes which allows us to transfer information very quickly. But what strikes me, as the biggest change, is the DSS administration's eagerness to hear what we think. The board of the support group has been sitting in on a

number of meetings with DSS administration. Most recently, we have been asked to sit on the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents Committee. This invitation has enabled us to brainstorm with the staff as well as share what we have learned and what we perceive our needs to be. Each member of the board is also pursuing other projects to hopefully improve communication between foster parents and staff as well as finding ways to better service our children.

You should have recently received a survey in the mail; I hope you took the time to fill it out. This is one way for you to be heard. Some of you attended the support group meeting where Pat Body; A supervisor and Brian McKee; Deputy Commissioner explained the survey and answered questions. In July there were at least two different meetings that you could have attended to hear the results of the survey. There will be another scheduled in September for those who could not attend. These meeting will also give you an additional opportunity to be heard. I strongly recommend that you attend one of these meeting not just to hear the results of the survey but to let DSS know what you need. If we do not tell them our needs, they will not know what they are. Brian McKee frequently tells his story about us asking for apples and his giving us oranges, illustrating his point that we have to be really clear about our needs. Lets take this opportunity offered to us and explain that apples are red not orange and they grow right here in Onondaga County.

Debi Southard

## **Update on Foster Parent Support Group Meeting of April 26**

At the April 26<sup>th</sup> Support Group Meeting, our speaker was Karen Howard. Karen is the Coordinator for the Onondaga, Cortland and Madison County BOCES Special Education Training Resource Center (SETRC). She shared a large amount of information with us about the CSE process. All of the support group board members were present at the meeting and would be more than happy to share the information we learned with you. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. For additional information on the topic please visit [www.vesid.nysed.gov](http://www.vesid.nysed.gov)

## **May was Foster Parent Month**

I wrote this in May, which as you know was foster parent month. The foster parent appreciation dinner was on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and although it was truly a wonderful evening of relaxation and enjoyment, it is only a small expression of our appreciation of all you, as foster parents do. The children of Onondaga County receive the benefit in a multitude of ways from your work and devotion.

If the cloning of human beings were allowed, we would be petitioning to have our foster parents be among the first to be cloned. In other words we can use more people to become foster parents and we would like you to help us spread the word. Every year there is some loss of foster parents due to their retiring or adopting. In order to ensure good matches between foster parents and foster children we need more available homes. We need more homes that are able to take sibling groups of three or more children. We need more homes to take medically fragile children. To make a long story short – we need more foster homes.

Onondaga County DSS is currently working on a very ambitious recruitment and retention plan. Part of the plan is to appeal to you, our current foster parents, to help us recruit. If there is anyone you are aware of that you think might have a little extra love to give to a child then please plant a seed with him or her to at least think about becoming a foster parent. If there is any information you need from us to assist you in this please ask your home finder.

In the fall we will begin to speak at PTA's, PTO's and Churches to reach more potential foster parents. We would like the speakers to be current foster parents from these schools and/or churches. We would have a DSS representative do the presentation with them if they would like. At the very least a DSS representative would be there to support the speaker and we would like both to be available after the meeting/service to answer any questions. If you would be interested in helping us in this effort please let your home finder know and we will be in contact in the late summer or early fall to make more specific arrangements. Again, thank you for all you do to offer a safe, loving home to children in need.

Mary Schapley

## **This Month's newsletter Topic/Story is delayed...**

Due to unforeseen events, the article for this month's newsletter is being postponed until the next newsletter. The topic being... "What to expect when a child is reunified with a birth parent" will be continued during the next newsletter.

Opinions and Stories can be sent to [wgambino@twcnny.rr.com](mailto:wgambino@twcnny.rr.com)



## Consent and Permissions

Perhaps one of the most confusing parts about being a foster parent is the paperwork that needs to follow our children when they are in the Commissioner's custody. The information below is intended to provide some clarification for you about some of our required paperwork for children.

Although we ask you to treat foster children as your own, when it comes to signing paperwork the Commissioner of Social Services is the custodian for the children. Only the birth parent, and/or the Commissioner or his designee, can sign forms for foster children. This includes even permission slips for school field trips. DSS is responsible for getting signatures from the birth parent, when necessary.

Some of the more common forms that you may be asked to sign that need to be signed by the birth parent and/or the Commissioner or his designee: permission to dispense medication at school, permission slips to play sports, Committee for Special Education forms, consent for medical treatment (you should be given a form signed by either the birth parent or the Commissioner at the time of placement), travel permission forms, and permission for psychotropic drugs.

If you are asked to sign consent forms, or have any questions about signatures, please contact your caseworker or home finder.



## Summer Picnic

**Just as a reminder...Please set aside August 7<sup>th</sup>, for our first foster/adoptive family picnic. The picnic will be held at Marcellus Park, rain or shine since we have rented a pavilion. More details will follow in July so look for the flyer. Hope to see you there.**

## Foster parent finder fee

As one of our new recruitment initiatives Onondaga County DSS has decided to offer a finder's fee to our current foster parents who are successful in recruiting new foster parents. We are asking current foster parents to refer families they feel would qualify and make good foster parents. If you know of a family please discuss the idea with them and get their approval. Then call us with their names and ask them to call us. Both calls can be made to the Intake phone, which is 435-3827. The fee would be paid once the new foster parents are certified and take their first placement

We are excited about this new initiative and are awaiting your referrals.



**A reminder:** Initial clothing vouchers are to be used for clothing only. When you receive the voucher there will be a list of suggested clothing items attached. This should be used as a guideline. You should be buying what the child needs and likes, but only clothing should be bought with this voucher.



## May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005 is Officially Foster/Adoptive Parents Appreciation Day

Nicholas J. Pirro issued a proclamation stating...

Whereas, Our community and our society need to protect our most vulnerable members; and Whereas, Some of the greatest needs are for safe places for children and youth to live and grow; and Whereas, All children and youth need permanency, and some children cannot ever safely return to their biological family, and seek to be permanently "claimed" by adoption; and Whereas, A regular home and family is the preferred placement for children's care; and Whereas, Currently, some 255 people, couples, or families have volunteered to help others by being foster homes and adoptive homes; and Whereas, Onondaga County's foster homes provide safe, nurturing, homes where over 300 children live, learn, recover and grow. Our community and staff at the Department of Social Services could not function without them, as they are amongst the finest, most nurturing and patient people, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for their commitment.

Now, Therefore, I, Nicholas J. Pirro, County Executive of the County of Onondaga, do hereby proclaim Wednesday, May 18, 2005 to be Foster/Adoptive Parents Appreciation Day in Onondaga County and Central New York, and urge all citizens to recognize Foster/Adoptive Parents for the work they do, the love they show, the dedication they have, and the countless lives that they have blessed.



## Cradle & Beyond

Cradle & Beyond is a quality used and new clothing store for children and adults. The store was started by a foster parent with the hope of providing good quality new or gently used name brand clothing at a reasonable price. All children's items in the store range from \$1 to \$3. The store was opened to help families that are trying to stretch their dollars and get name brand clothing at a good price.

The store is located in the basement of Andrew's Memorial United Methodist Church at 106 Church Street, North Syracuse. The phone number is 458-0890 and email is [office@andrewsmemorialumc.org](mailto:office@andrewsmemorialumc.org). Their hours are Wednesday 11am to 7pm and Thursday 11am to 4pm, donations are accepted Mondays and Tuesdays 8:30am through 4pm. All profits from sales go back into the store, not to the church.

**\$2**  
worth of goods

**Cradle & Beyond**  
(Specializing in new and used clothing)  
106 Church St.  
N. Syracuse, NY 13212  
(315) 458-0890

Open Wed. 11am-7pm  
Thurs. 11am-4pm

A mission of Andrews Memorial United Methodist Church SS05

## FROM THE NATIONAL FOSTER CARE COALITION:

The National Foster Care Coalition is partnering with the USO to develop a support network for former foster youth serving in the military in Iraq and Afghanistan. Currently, our organization is doing outreach to identify young people who are stationed in these countries. In 2005, NFCC will implement a program providing letters from home and care packages to the many soldiers who may not have family or other people to offer support to them while they are away.

You can help in this new effort! We will be organizing letter writing volunteers and care package collection; if you would like to help, please provide us with your contact information below, and we will contact you early in the New Year.

**Please use the online form link at <http://www.natl-fostercare.org/> to send us your information. Or mail to:**

Connect for Kids/NFCC  
1625 K St. NW 11th Floor  
Washington, DC 20006  
(memo line) Support Foster Care Soldiers

IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION, OR YOU KNOW A FORMER FOSTER YOUTH ON ACTIVE DUTY IN THE MILITARY WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM THIS PROGRAM, PLEASE CONTACT US AT 202-454-5608 OR [nfcc@connectforkids.org](mailto:nfcc@connectforkids.org).

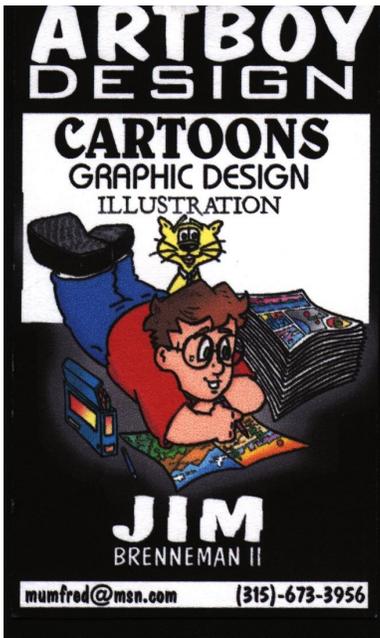
Note: The above information is from the National Foster Care Coalition.



### ***Upcoming OCF/APSG Meetings & Events:***

**August 7 -** foster family summer picnic @ Marcellus Park

**September 13 -** OCF/APSG Support Group Meeting,  
Hazard Library, Speaker: Barbara Benedict – CASA Program



A Special Thanks to ARTBOY Design  
For donating the new cartoon for each  
Newsletter! Thanks Jim!!

## Who we are...

The OCFAPSG was founded for the benefit of all foster/adoptive parents and children in their care. You are the group, the organization, the members that make the OCFAPSG what it is. If there are any questions, concerns or comments regarding this organization, please feel free to contact any of the Board members listed below.

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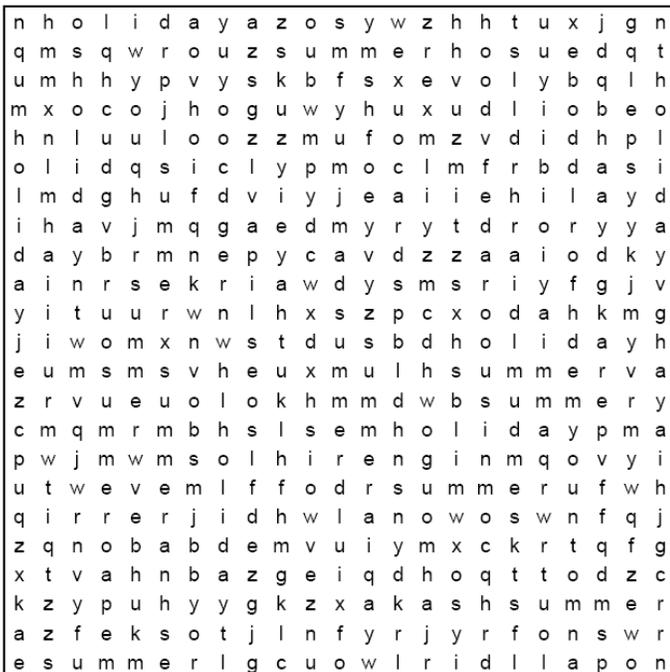
Karen Vedder  
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445.1086

If you have an article or tidbit that you would like to submit for upcoming issues, please forward to Debi Southard at the above email or mail to:

Debi Southard  
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Nedrow, NY 13120

## The Kids Corner

### Summer Holiday Word Search



How many times can you find the words  
"summer" and "holiday" in this puzzle?

The boy wants to fly his kite  
at the park. Can you help him  
find his way?

