



The Fostering Connection

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

Volume 2, Issue 3

Spring 2006

Inside This Issue.

2	Sarah
2	Federal Adoption Tax Credit for Special Needs Adoptions
3	Cradle & Beyond
4	Reprint – Questions for Case Workers or What Every Foster Parent Needs to Know
5	2 nd Annual “We Are Family” Foster/Adoptive Family Picnic Flyer
6	Give Your Life A Smile Update – Spring ‘06
6	Foster Family Loan Closet
6	Life Books...
7	Questions for Case Workers...or What Every Foster Parent Needs to know... a reprint
8	The Kids Corner

Seventh Annual Syracuse Regional Adoption Festival!!

Across the Syracuse region alone there are over 160 children who are freed for adoption and in need of a permanent family. In the region’s continued efforts to help children find a permanent home, we are pleased to announce the Seventh Annual Adoption Festival coordinated by the New York State Office of Children & Family Services and Arise Inc., that will be held at Arise at the Farm in Chittenango, NY on Friday, 7/7/06. This daylong event allows for prospective adoptive parents and children freed for adoption to interact in a day dedicated to friendship, fun and games. These activities include horse rides, hayrides, fishing, team building games, and more. These activities allow for children and families to get to know one another in a non-threatening and fun environment. By attending the festival a family has the

opportunity to meet the child(ren) who could complete their family. In previous years the event has been a success due to children being adopted as a result of a match made through the festival. Last year in particular, we had an excellent turnout with 29 families and 34 children in attendance. As a result, five children were successfully placed in pre-adoptive homes, and in addition several other children started visitation with prospective adoptive homes. Our sincerest thanks goes out to everyone who attended and helped make the festival a success.

We are extending our invitation to all adoptive families and those who are in the process of completing their foster and/or adoptive parent certification (contingent upon your local district’s approval) to attend this great event. Lunch is provided to all who attend at no expense. Please contact your Local Department of Social Services Adoption/Homefinding Unit to register. You may also contact Kelly Proctor-Leon at the Syracuse Regional Office at 315-423-1200 for more specific details regarding the festival. We look forward to seeing you there!

Current Email Address Updates

The support group would like to ask you to make sure that we have your current email address. Frequently, we become aware of information or opportunities that would benefit our foster families but have no method of distributing that information to you other than the newsletter, which is only published quarterly. Email is the fastest and cheapest way for us to reach you. If you receive periodic email from Cathy Dutton in homefinding then we have your current email address. If you don’t, would you please update your information by sending an email to debisouthard@twcny.rr.com and Cathy.Dutton@dfa.state.ny.us Please include your name so that we can update our records. Please remember us when you change your email address in the future.

Thank you.

Sarah

My name is Sarah
I am but three,
My eyes are swollen
I cannot see,

I must be stupid,
I must be bad,
What else could have made
My daddy so mad?

I wish I were better,
I wish I weren't ugly,
Then maybe my Mommy
Would still want to hug me.

I can't speak at all,
I can't do a wrong
Or else I'm locked up
All the day long.

When I awake I'm all alone
The house is dark
My folks aren't home.

When my Mommy does come
I'll try and be nice,
So maybe I'll get just
One whipping tonight.

Don't make a sound!
I just heard a car
My daddy is back
From Charlie's Bar.

I hear him curse
My name he calls
I press myself
Against the wall.

I try and hide
From his evil eyes
I'm so afraid now
I'm starting to cry.

He finds me weeping
He shouts ugly words,
He says its my fault
That he suffers at work.

He slaps me and hits me
And yells at me more,
I finally get free
And I run for the door.
He's already locked it
And I start to bawl,
He takes me and throws me
Against the hard wall.

I fall to the floor
With my bones nearly broken,
And my daddy continues

With more bad words spoken.
"I'm sorry!", I scream
But its now much too late
His face has been twisted
Into unimaginable hate.

The hurt and the pain
Again and again
Oh please God, have mercy!
Oh please let it end!

And he finally stops
And heads for the door,
While I lay there motionless
Sprawled on the floor.

My name is Sarah
And I am but three,
Tonight my daddy
Murdered me.

There are thousands of kids out there just like Sarah. And you can help.

So all we are asking you to do is take some time to send this on and acknowledge that this stuff does happen, and that people like her dad do live in our society, and **pray** for child abuse to wither out and die, but also pray for the safety of our youth.

Federal Adoption Tax Credit for Special Needs Adoptions

Beginning in tax year 2003, families adopting a child with special needs from foster care were allowed access to this same tax credit without needing to document expenses. For tax year 2005, the tax credit is \$10,630 per child and you have this year and up to the next five years in which to use it. For families that adopted in 2002 or earlier, you can only claim the credit against expenses you paid related to the adoption process.

- **The first question many people ask, or are asked by their tax preparer is, "How do I know if my child is considered to have special needs according to the IRS?"**

The North American Council on Adoptable Children interprets the Instruction to say: if you receive an adoption subsidy (assistance) for your child, that means the state that provides the subsidy has determined your child has special needs. Your adoption subsidy agreement (or application and agreement) is the evidence that the state has determined your child to have special needs. **Note:** this information used to be contained in IRS Publication 968, which is now obsolete. That same information is now contained in the Instructions for Form 8839.

Instructions for Form 8839, which can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/instructions/i8839/ch02.html#d0e285>, is quoted below:

Column (d)

A child is a child with special needs if all three of the following apply:

1. *The child was a citizen or resident of the United States or its possessions at the time the adoption process began.*
2. *A state (including the District of Columbia) has determined that the child cannot or should not be returned to his or her parents' home.*
3. *The state has determined that the child will not be adopted unless assistance is provided to adoptive parents.*

Factors used by states to make this determination include:

- a. The child's ethnic background and age,*
- b. Whether the child is a member of a minority or sibling group, and*
- c. Whether the child has a medical condition or physical, mental, or emotional handicap.*

If you check the box in column (d), be sure to keep evidence of the state's determination in your records.

• The second most common question is, "What does this mean to our family?" We don't know the specific answer to that question because we don't do your taxes. However, we can help you figure it out.

Many people believe the Federal Adoption Tax Credit won't help them because they get a refund every year, but that isn't necessarily true. A refund means you have overpaid what you owe in federal income tax, so the IRS refunds you the amount overpaid. The tax credit is applied against what you owe, and could reduce it to \$0, which would increase your refund. The amount that you owe is the number you come up with from the tax tables (the number in line 28 of the 1040A, or line 46 of the 1040). Here are some examples of how the tax credit might benefit your family.

- Family one is a couple who adopts a sibling group of two children with special needs. They typically have \$6,500 in federal income tax withheld from their paychecks, and the tax that they owe is \$7,000, which means they owe \$500 in April. Now, with the adoption tax credit, they have \$21,260 in credits, and this year they could use up to \$7,000 of the credit.¹ This will mean they get a refund this year of \$6,500, and will have at least \$14,260 of tax credit to carryover for up to four years.

- Family two is a single mother who adopts a sibling group of three children with special needs. Typically she has \$5,000 in federal income tax withheld from her paychecks, and the tax that she owes is \$4,000, which means she receives a refund of \$1,000 in April. Now, with the adoption tax credit, she has \$31,890 in credits, and this year she could use up to \$4,000 of the credit. This will mean she will get a refund this year of \$5,000, and will have at least \$27,890 of tax credit to carryover for up to four years.

- Family three is a couple with five children who adopts a sibling group of two children with special needs. They typically have \$1000 in federal income tax withheld from their paychecks, and the tax that they owe is \$0, which means they receive a refund of \$1,000 in April. Now, with the adoption tax credit, they have \$21,260, but with no tax liability they are unable to use any of the adoption tax credit this year. They can still claim the tax credit, but it has to be in the year that the adoption was finalized. The credit would carryforward for the next five years or until it is used up. The two most likely reasons a family would claim it is if their tax liability varies greatly from year to year, or if the children already in their household are near adulthood and may no longer be claimed as dependents (or take the child tax credit) in the next five years.

Information for filling out Form 8839: Qualified Adoption Expenses

If you do your own taxes, you may have a couple questions when you fill out Form 8839.

• What do you do when they ask for qualifying expenses on line 5 and you didn't have any?

Go to page 4 of the Instructions for Form 8839, which can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/instructions/i8839/ch02.html#d0e640>, quoted below, it says:

But, if you adopted a child with special needs and the adoption became final in 2005, enter \$10,630 on line 5.

This means that you do NOT have to document qualifying expenses to take the credit.

• **What if the tax you owe is less than \$10,630?**

Then you will also need to fill out the Credit Carryforward Worksheet on page 4 of the Instructions for Form 8839. This is how you are able to carry the remaining credit forward for up to the next five years or until it is used up.

Finally, if you receive adoption subsidy (assistance) for your child and have questions on whether it is taxable income or if you can claim that child as a dependent, you should read our fact sheet, which can be found at <http://www.nacac.org/subsidyfactsheets/taxes.html>.

If you have questions on the adoption tax credit, contact the North American Council on Adoptable Children at 651-644-3036 or adoption.assistance@nacac.org.

If you can claim the child tax credit (see IRS publication 972) or other credits, you should claim them.

Reprinted from the North American Council on Adoptable Children www.nacac.org



106 Church Street
North Syracuse
458-0890

Store Hours: Wed 11am – 7pm Thurs. 11am – 4pm Sat. 10am – 2pm
Tax Deductible donations accepted during store hours or Mon, Tues, Fri, 9am-3pm

I'm sure many of you recall reading about the store in the newsletter a few times last year. Sixteen months ago, a foster parent just like you, decided opening a store of new and gently used clothing and essentials for foster children and others in need sounded like a good idea. She then turned to their Church and asked for volunteers to help with making this idea a reality. The idea was embraced with open arms. Six months and a lot of brainstorming later, the doors opened. At first we started off using two rooms in the basement of the church, today we have expanded too the use of four rooms and a long hallway. The store has served more than 2,100 people. We work to help many of those in need including foster families, Vera House, fire victims, and the Refugee Resettlement Program. None of the money raised by the store goes to the church, it all stays within the store and continues to help others. Our new goal for 2006 is to purchase a storefront property so we can continue to help the community.

As we continue to help more and more people each month we are finding the need for infant clothing or children in general is in high demand. So high that the minute we get children's clothing in we sort it right then to hang it on a rack. I'm asking for your help in getting the word out for donations of infant/ children's clothing. Remember this is a tax deductible donation. Pick up can be arranged if needed. We accept a wide range of items including adult clothes, blankets, and bedding.

Thank you for your continued support,
A fellow foster parent

Hair Care Notice:

Foster/Adoptive mom, Roslyn Hurt has graciously offered to assist in or teach "hair care for African -American children" to any other foster mother who is unfamiliar with what should be done to maintain healthy and attractive hair. Roslyn lives in the city and can be reached in the evenings at 422 - 1962.



Onondaga County Foster/Adoptive Parent Association
IS PROUD TO SPONSOR OUR...

2nd Annual
"We Are Family"
PICNIC



free parking!
free admission!

**Saturday
August 12th**

MARCELLUS PARK (directions on back)

VILLAGE OF MARCELLUS

NOON - 5 pm

Lots of shade trees!

Restrooms on site

We will provide paper products, utensils, condiments,
non-alcoholic beverages, ice and charcoal for the grills.

Guests please bring your own meat (to grill) and a dish to pass

IF YOUR LAST NAME STARTS WITH:

A-I please bring a dessert

J-S please bring a salad or similar item

T-Z please bring a snack item

Grills fired at
12:30
Main meal
foods out at
1pm

Bring your own
LAWN CHAIRS
PLEASE!

**A Good Time
for All Ages!**



**Games &
Activities!**

R.S.V.P BY Friday August 4th

Debi Southard 492-1882 or Nancy MacLachlan 673-1430

Give Your Life a Smile

Update - Spring 06

As most of you are aware, Children's Division has been recruiting foster homes for years. Much of the recruitment has been behind the scenes, without a lot of publicity. We have had some successful efforts and some less than successful efforts.

One of the things we have learned is that the Community has not always been aware of the good things that foster parents do and of the joys and rewards you have experienced while providing a home for children in need.

So, one of the important parts of our new recruitment effort, *Give Your Life a Smile*, has been to show the community a more positive image of foster parenting, and to recognize the rewards as well as to acknowledge the important work you do.

It is with this image in mind that we are capitalizing on opportunities for publicity through the news media, posters and advertisements. We hope you have seen some of these. We are also in the process of having Town Meetings, where foster parents and adult graduates of the program speak to groups about the important work and the rewards of foster parenting.

We have had record numbers of inquiries in the past couple of months. We have had two Town Meetings so far, with some more planned for the future. While the actual numbers of people attending the meetings have been lower than we had hoped, those who have attended have been interested, responsive and serious. Some have begun training and others are scheduled to begin soon. We are hopeful that these efforts will result in an increase in the numbers of families who will be able to meet the needs of the children of Onondaga County.

So, please, each time you see a poster or an ad, see a newspaper article or a report on tv, or receive a postcard inviting you to *Give Your Life A Smile*, we would ask that you recognize what a good and important job you do, and think of some of the times that foster parenting has indeed given your life a smile.

Barbara Gifford
Homefinding Supervisor

Foster Family Loan Closet

The following is a list of items that are available for those who have a need for them. Please contact Cathy Dutton at 435-3828 if you need any of these items or if you have any items you would like to give to other foster parents.

Shoes - play sneakers, small sizes
Shoes - MUDD boots, size 13 (new)

Clothes - girls jeans with pink trim, size 12 (look new)
Clothes - girls pants, pink cotton, size 14 (new)
Clothes - girls red velour warm-up suit, size 14/16 (new)
Clothes - playcoats- heavy coats and windbreakers, boys and girls, sizes vary, used
Clothes - snowpants- used
Clothes - mens pants, size 40
Clothes - assorted children's clothes, used
Clothes - some baby clothes

Books - Boxcar Children (like new)
Books - Goosebumps
Books - Animorphs
Books - Dear Diary Girls book of Devotions

Stuffed Animals

Car Seat infant Car Seat

Stroller single stroller
Stroller
Stroller

Lifebooks...

Are you interested in working on a lifebook for your foster child or maybe working on a lifebook for your family of all your foster children? I have done both and it is a great remembrance and a lot of fun to do. I would like to see how many of you are interested and work on setting up a get together once a month. It would be a great night out (we can all use that!!) Please join me for some food and fun remembering all our kids past and present!

If you are interested please email me at kathij85@usadatanet.net or call me 498-6677. Look forward to hearing from you soon!!

Kathi Joslyn

Being a foster parent of 5 years I don't think you are ever prepared for the call from Homefinding asking if you can take on another child. A million things run through my head and the minute I hang up the phone I think of at least three things I should have asked. Does this sound familiar? Debi Southard had written a list of questions and put them in a previous newsletter. I thought that was a great idea and told myself that I needed to make sure this was kept in a safe place. Well I did put it in a safe place, but as of yet I still have not found it! So I have asked Debi to reprint this information with a suggestion to all of you from me to place this list on the side of your refrigerator, inside a cupboard door, or maybe a day planner (I can't live without mine). I do hope you find this list as helpful as I did.

Kathi Joslyn

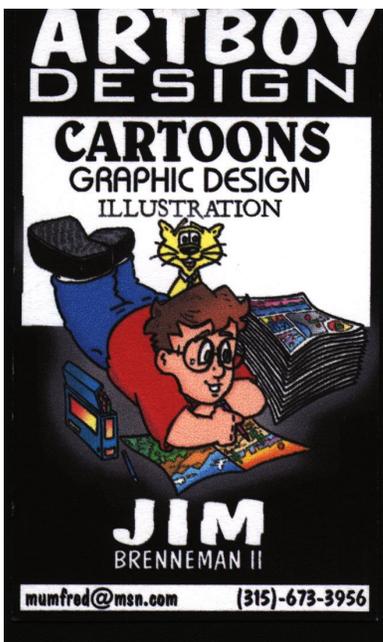
Questions for Case Workers Or What Every Foster Parent Needs to Know

By Deborah Southard

When a child is placed in your care, you have the right to have, and the professional obligation to find out, the information you will need to care for this child to the best of your ability. You must have specific information in order to be a parent to this child as well as to fulfill your role as team member, primary treatment provider, and mentor/role model for birth parents and advocate for the child. Some of the questions you should ask are:

- **Why is the child being placed, is this the first time, if not how many previous and why the moves?**
- **What is the child's legal status?**
- **Has the child received placement physical? When? Results?**
- **Is the child on medication?**
- **Are there any medical allergies?**
- **Does the child have Medicaid Card, immunization records, and medical consent form?**
- **When was the last Dental check-up, eye exam?**
- **Does the child have food allergies or need special dietary considerations?**
- **What is the child's educational background and record?**
- **What grade? At, Above or Below grade level.**
- **Have transcripts or a copy of the ISP been requested?**
- **Are there any specific school related issues we should be aware of?**
- **Does the child have any behavior problems, unusual habit we should be aware of?**
For example: sexual acting out, toileting issues, sleep, behavioral issues, what, why and when?
- **Does the child have any siblings? Where do they reside? Is there a sibling visitation plan? Why are the siblings not placed together?**
- **Who is allowed to call and visit? How often? Starting when? Any restrictions? Is child allowed to call, write, contact, and visit others? If restrictions, what are they?**
- **Who is the child's Law Guardian?**
- **When is the next Court Hearing?**
- **When is the next Service Plan Review scheduled?**
- **What are the agency's expectations of your family?**
- **Permission for Church and Sunday school attendance.**
- **Are there sufficient clothes? If not, when can a clothing voucher be issued?**

Reprinted from The Fostering Connection a quarterly publication of the Onondaga County Foster/Adoptive Parent Support Group, September 2004



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.

Millie Williams

millanese1@aol.com

488.3236

Debi Southard

debisouthard@twcny.rr.com

492.1882

Karen Vedder

kvedder@twcny.rr.com

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

3305 Cedarvale Road

Nedrow, NY 13120

The Kids Corner

Weather Word Search



- | | | | |
|---------|-------|-------------|----------|
| tornado | cloud | ice | rain |
| shower | sun | flood | humidity |
| thunder | snow | thermometer | frost |
| wind | heat | cold | |

I want to play with my friends!
Can you help me find the way?

