



CHEROKEE COUNTY FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATION

From The President

Cherokee County Foster
Adoptive & Parents
Association

August 2011

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I would like to thank those who attended last week's workshop on Parental Resilience presented by Strengthening Families Georgia., we had a great turnout.

Our next conference is scheduled for **November 12th** at the Antioch Church in Hickory Flat. Six training hours will be earned. We are working on getting more evening classes this fall so stay tuned.

The next Give Me A Break event will be on **October 22nd** at the Boys & Girls Club, we will have a professional retired NBA basketball player Marcus Wilson coming to play ball with the kids.

October 15th we will be hosting [TheCouponCutie](#) Amber Rutledge (Extreme Couponing Without Extreme Measures) for a class on how to save at the grocery store, retail stores and entertainment. This is a fundraiser and is open to the public. The cost for foster parents is \$10 and general public is \$15. Once she sends me the link to register we will be sending it out to everyone.

Rachel at [fostercare.org](#) will be sending out her reminder this month to register for Fall/Winter clothes and equipment so that you can make your appointment for October. With budget cuts coming this is a great resource to take advantage of for needed items.

Message from Fellow Foster Parent

Hi everyone, I usually don't say very much, unless it happens to be about our foster children and making sure their needs are being met. However, I felt the need to say something to our fellow foster parents about these training opportunities. I understand that our lives are extremely busy and time is a premium that we don't give up easily (especially weekends), but DFCS requires 10 hours of training a year, not much by any means. By attending 2 of these training opportunities, you can potentially get 12 hours of training and you've met your annual commitment to DFCS. Tell me where you can get 6 hours of training in one 8 hour period (at least 4 times a year), have lunch, and have **free childcare** (for birth, foster, and adoptive children) for \$10 a year? In addition, you get an opportunity to meet other foster parents, make new friends, and learn new things. Do you need to renew your first aid and CPR certification? That's also available at these sessions. Marie and the other board members do a wonderful job putting these training sessions together for one purpose; to help all foster parents get their training requirements completed. Embrace offers online training classes that provide a wealth of information for an hour credit as well.

My wife and I have been active members of the Cherokee County Foster & Adoptive Parents Association for almost 5 years and every year we have been able to meet our training hours in the first 6-8 months of the year. In the past, this was accomplished by attending the monthly CCFAPA meetings, but now we attend 2 of these Saturday sessions. We also get a chance to catch up with our friends and meet other foster parents, swap stories, etc... Plus our kids, both foster and adoptive, get a chance to run and play with other children and their friends. We may not attend every session, but we usually attend more than is required to get our 10 hours of training. We've also been fortunate enough to get a scholarship to one of the AFPAG conferences a few years ago. Unfortunately in the last few years due to budget constraints, DFCS, AFPAG, and other organizations have had to cut down on the scholarships that they offer to these events. If you can afford to go, we would highly recommend it.

Our organization is only as strong as those foster families that participate. Together we can support each other; apart we will only wither away. Come join us.

Regards, Dennis M. Yee, Member, Cherokee County Foster & Adoptive Parents Association.

I thought the foster parents should hear from someone else for once. Thanks for everything you do Marie.

Back to School Safety Tips for Children & Families

Say goodbye to summer and hello to fall. It's school time again! Just like teachers, books, and homework go hand in hand with the school year, so should safety.



Bus Safety

1. While waiting for the bus, take five giant steps back from the curb until the bus has stopped completely.
2. Inside the bus, stay seated at all times.
3. Keep head, arms and hands inside the bus. Never throw anything out of the bus window.
4. Always hold on to the bus handrails when you are getting on or off the bus so you don't fall.
5. Be careful that clothing, book bags, and key rings don't get caught in the handrails or doors
6. When getting off the bus, go to the closest sidewalk or side of the road and take five giant steps away from the bus.
7. If you drop something near the bus, tell the bus driver. If you bend over to pick it up, the bus driver may not be able to see you.



Walking to School

1. Children under age 10 should never cross a street without a grown-up.
2. Choose a safe route to school. Look for the most direct route with the fewest street crossings.
3. When crossing the street, stop at the curb or edge of the road.
4. Look left, then right, then left again for moving cars before crossing.
5. Keep looking left and right until you are safely across the street - and remember to walk, not run.
6. Follow all traffic signals and markings.
7. Don't enter the street from between parked cars or from behind bushes or shrubs. Drivers might not be able to see you.



Biking to School

1. If you are old enough to ride alone, plan a safe route to school and have a grown-up ride with you the first few times.
2. Children under 10 shouldn't ride on the road without a grown-up.
3. Be sure that your helmet fits. It should sit even on top of the head -not rocking in any direction-and always fasten the safety strap.
4. Learn the proper hand signals and use them when you turn or stop.
5. Walk, do not ride your bike across the street.
6. Come to a complete stop before entering driveways, paths or sidewalks, then look left, right and left again for bikes, cars or pedestrians heading your way.
7. Do not ride at night.



And last, but not least, if you are riding in a car to school the safest place to be if you are 12 years old or younger is in the back seat buckled up safely.

Message from D'Anna

Nothing you do for children is ever wasted ~ Garrison Keillor



School has been in session all month! I'm sure; by now children already have projects, assignments, tests, much like adults in the work world. With these added responsibilities and challenges, our children need your guidance and support to get their school year off in good form!

As an update, in July, we took custody of 22 children in July. This was an unanticipated high number for us, given the summer, which has been typically slower with new referrals; nevertheless, we now have custody of 13 new boys and 9 new girls. 4 of these children were from 0-4; 10 were from 6-12; and 8 were 13 and over. 21 of these children were white and 1 was bi-racial. 8 of these children were placed in Cherokee DFCS foster homes; 4 were placed in private agency foster homes; 3 were placed with relatives; 5 were placed in group homes; 1 was placed in a therapeutic residential facility; and 1 was placed at RYDC. There were 2 sibling groups of 2 children and 3 sibling groups of 3 children. There were 2 re-entries. Most of these children were made known to use through new Investigations, however, 2 came from a Permanency aftercare case where the children re-entered care due to their parents' violation of their court-ordered protective order; and 1 came from a guardianship failure causing the child to enter foster care. There were not any children returned at the 72-hour hearing, but there were 2 children returned at the 10-day hearing. We noted that several of these children had multiple issues either emotionally or criminally, thus, making placement decisions more challenging.

Last month, we had 13 children exit foster care so we ended July with 157 children in care. We did not finalize any adoptions. Our median # of days in care for June is 248 days. (This accounts for all children in care), this is slightly down from last month. 10 of these 13 children exited care due to reunification to family, and the remaining 3 exited through Emancipation.

As we enter the remaining quarter of this year, I want to share some concerns I have about our ability to continue to make reimbursements to you through our existing County Funds. With almost every agency, budget concerns present a challenge in deciding what cost should be covered and what costs must be covered. We are going to have to make some difficult decisions in the next several weeks about the current reimbursement rates for items such as child allowances, seasonal clothing, school supplies, etc. There is insufficient County Funds to continue to support these expenses at the rate we are currently able to. Our County Board of Directors is aware of these concerns and we are working together on the best plan we can take to ensure your needs as Foster Parents are met. I anticipate there will be continued limitations as the New Year 2012 begins as well. I am sharing this to inform you of these challenges, so when decisions are made, you are not uninformed regarding the basis for such decisions.

Another challenge that we are facing is the elimination of State Funds to support our Foster Parent Liaison position. As you know, Amy Blanton has held for the past several years. Effective September 15, the funding to support the Embrace initiative has been eliminated from the State budget. Amy has provided countless hours of support to Foster Parents and to our staff. We are very disappointed in this loss of funds and position. We will need your support and flexibility as we move forward without this position.

On behalf of the agency, I want to thank Amy for her genuine spirit and passion she has for Foster Parents and all the children we are serving.

Lastly, I want to share staffing challenges that we are facing within the agency. We have not had the ability to

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Message from D'Anna

hire staff when vacancies occur on a routine basis. This is a statewide challenge for all DFCS agencies. While we are able to submit a Critical Hire request, over the course of one month, the Commissioner and State level leadership are only allowing 20-25 positions to be filled statewide. You can imagine how this trickles down to each County and restricts our ability to fill positions. With this in mind, we have had 3 resignations in the Permanency Unit since the spring, with 2 resignations just this month. These 3 positions have significantly impacted our ability to serve the children as well as be responsive to you. We currently have 7 vacancies. We have 8 case managers who handle our Point of Contact role, Permanency caseloads, and adoption cases. So far in August, we have had 25 children enter care. We are constantly shifting cases from one case manager to another to evenly distribute the work. Unfortunately this situation does not promote continuity for our children and families and is less than ideal case management. Our case managers are continuing to struggle to keep up with the requirement of seeing all of their children and parent every month as well as the other demands of their caseload. The good news is (yes there is some!), that we did receive permission to hire 1 position and have planned interviews for mid-September. I can emphasize enough how these staffing challenges restrict our ability to be available and as responsive to you. Please contact the unit supervisors, Jennifer Leikam, Julie Evans or Sylvia Freeman when you have an issue and are unable to reach staff. Margaret Dawe, our Permanency Administrator is also a resource to you, as am I, so please contact on any of us as you have a need or concern.

We are planning to hold a Focus Group Meeting, or Roundtable, with you in September so we can openly discuss these challenges as well as any decisions regarding budget that may impact you. Look for a forthcoming message about a meeting later in September.

"All kids need a little help, a little hope and somebody who believes in them." ~ Earvin "Magic" Johnson

As the school year begins, take the time to be available to the children in your home as they do homework and work on projects. Your support and encouragement during these times may change their outlook on school and their interest in their education. I value each of you and thank you for providing children with a strong sense of family and love. You are changing the lives of children and changing the world by your compassion to serve others.



D'Anna Liber, dkliber@dhr.state.ga.us

Cherokee County Foster Adoptive & Parents Association



Building The Future with our Foster and Adoptive Parents as they open their hearts & their homes to children.

Check website calendar for upcoming events & training.

www.fosteroradopt.org



If you would like to receive the newsletter via email go to our web site and signup.

If your email changes let us know so that we can update our records.

Check us out on **Facebook**, many of our foster parents are connecting via the net. Click link below or put "Cherokee County Foster" to find us.

<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?sid=9337e82e1d11a302dc6636ebf8cd44e4&eid=75644102307&ref=search>

2011 Board Members

President

Marie Blackwell
mblackwell@fosteroradopt.org
770-378-0759

Vice President

Rick Fueston

Secretary/Treasurer

Debbie Earle

If you are interested in sitting on our board let us know, we can always use the help!!

Our address has changed:

162 Morris Rd
Canton, GA 30114

Other Associations or Support Foundations

Foster Care Support Foundation

located at 115 Mansell Place, Roswell, Ga. 30076, 770-641-9591,
<http://www.fostercares.org>

Email: Rachel Ewald rachel@fostercares.org

AFPAG (State Foster Parent Association)

Feel free to contact them at: contactafpag@bellsouth.net