

# Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

Volume 22 Number 5

Newsletter

May 2019

***AFFM's mission is to provide the training, guidance, knowledge and resources needed to handle the complex issues encountered by resource families as they open their hearts and homes to children in need.***

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc. (AFFM) provides support services for adoptive, foster and kinship families. This includes kinship families in the informal system (not working in conjunction with DHHS).

Child welfare is dependent upon a myriad of state and federal laws, rules and regulations. Decisions concerning families and innocent children are rarely easy, and are usually fraught with highly emotional issues. AFFM is dedicated to assisting families to help children find the security they deserve. AFFM understands every situation in fostering, adoption and kinship care is unique and families will face challenges. AFFM strives to continue to be a resource for families and is available 24/7.

AFFM believes that Maine's children have the right to be a member of a healthy, safe and stable family.

AFFM believes that all adoptive, foster and kinship families deserve to have unconditional support to help build on their strengths and to provide the best quality home environment possible.

AFFM believes that access to services to enhance families abilities and develop new skills is imperative.

AFFM believes all families who open their homes to Maine's children deserve unbiased support.

### **Are You Aware of AFFM's Allegation Support?**

Nearly every foster parent will experience an allegation at least once during their foster parenting career. AFFM's Allegation Support Team members are trained to offer:

- ◆ Non-judgmental listening
- ◆ A place for you to vent
- ◆ An explanation for the DHHS investigation process
- ◆ Help to assess what is abuse and what is a licensing violation
- ◆ Information on the length of the investigating process
- ◆ Help in understanding the DHHS chain of command
- ◆ Help in preparing to meet with DHHS staff
- ◆ Help in assessing if legal counsel is warranted
- ◆ Encouragement to advocate for yourself
- ◆ AFFM's commitment to maintain confidentiality according to Maine Law



***Learn more about the support services AFFM offers by calling 207-827-2331 or visit [www.affm.net](http://www.affm.net)***

# AFFM's Annual Spring Conference Recap

On April 12th and April 13th AFFM held their 22nd Annual Spring Conference in Bangor, Maine. The conference, "Trauma and the Aftermath: Recognizing the Issues, Working Towards Solutions" focused on the opioid epidemic and ways to support all who have been affected. AFFM was pleased to have two very dynamic keynote speakers Bill Cumming and Judith Josiah-Martin PhD, ACSW, CADC, who shared their expertise on the subject and gave attendees great tips on how to care for the children in their homes as well as the importance of caring for themselves. The breakout sessions all proved to be just as powerful. During Friday's lunch AFFM, along with OCFS, recognized and honored resource families who go above and beyond in their district and have actively supported permanency efforts for children in care. AFFM also honored the professionals who actively support permanency efforts for children in care as well as excel in supporting positive outcomes for children and families.

***This year's recipients are:***

## **Child Welfare Leadership Award**

Batool Qweider  
Christina Hunnighaus  
Chad Kelley

## **Guardian ad Litem of the Year**

Sharon Silberman-Hummels, Esq.

## **Kinship Advocate of The Year**

Jennifer Crittenden

## **Child Welfare Advocate of The Year**

Bobbi Johnson

## **Community Partner of The Year**

Ogunquit Spirit of Giving Committee

## **The Deb Irish Volunteer of the Year Award**

A Place Called Home, Janalee Moquin

## **2019 Resource Family of The Year**

D1 - Kristen DeForge  
D2 - Hannah and Jeremy Pelletier  
D3 - Melissa and Evan Hutchinson  
D4 - Jasmine and Larry Sawyer  
D5 - Jessica and Timothy Edwards  
D6 - Katie and Hugh Landry  
D7- Julie and Joseph Donahue  
D8 - Joe and Anita Pokorny



Thank you to all of the presenters, vendors, volunteers, AFFM Board of Directors and staff for all your hard work in making this year a success. Thank you to NESCOM for filming and recording the keynote presentations and workshops. A video of this will be available to view soon!

## Camp Scholarship Opportunities!



AFFM is excited to announce that with the support of the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), children in adoptive families and children under a permanency guardianship agreement are eligible to receive a scholarship for camp! To apply for the scholarship we ask that you have a camp in mind and contact information available. Funds are limited, so this is a first come first serve basis. Please call AFFM at 827-2331 if you are in need.

In addition, AFFM would be happy to help in the search for scholarships and donated spots at a camp for all resource families. Licensed families, DHHS may have funds available for youth in foster care to attend a week of summer camp. Please check with your caseworker before applying.

# Family Fun Day at Ferry Beach!

Entertainment will be provided by Sparks' Ark! Families will enjoy a cookout, games, prizes, giveaways, and more!

Saturday June 29, 2019

Noon to 3:00PM

5 Morris Ave, Saco

RSVP by calling 827-2331 or email [info@affm.net](mailto:info@affm.net)



## NEW Section: Feel Good Stories!

I have the good fortune to co-lead the Kinship Training for families in District 6 at Bangor DHHS. In each training we ask participants to share one or two things that helps to remind them of why they love caring for their relative's child/children. It's an exercise called "Pure Joy". Listed below are a few of the things they shared. I hope they make you smile!

- \* When I come home and my granddaughter comes to me yelling, "Papa, Papa!"
- \* It is fun parenting a two-year-old after parenting the two older siblings ages 15 & 16!
- \* I love sharing nature together
- \* He told me a story of how he came into the world
- \* Our 8-year-old is in 4-H and raising baby goats. She loves it!
- \* I love "when she smiles with eyes and mouth from waking to bedtime!"
- \* I love when she looks in the mirror and says, "Wow, I look good!"
- \* "Nana, I love you. Thanks for letting me keep my dog."
- \* I love when he smiles with his first teeth and he crawls and laughs as we follow him.
- \* I love how his speech has improved. He communicates fully now!



A recent story, I thought I was being clever and made my grandson a pancake shaped like Mickey Mouse. I proudly said to him, "Look Mickey Mouse." To which he promptly replied, "No Gramma", as he pointed at the food in his plate, "Pancake, pancake Gramma!" He is quite delightful!

I hope each of you, as you parent, will take the time from your busy and often stressful days to notice the things that bring you "Pure Joy!" Thank you for making a positive difference in the life of a child.

Bette Hoxie, Kinship Specialist

*Do you have a "Feel Good" story you'd like to share?*

*Please email Meagan at [meagan@affm.net](mailto:meagan@affm.net) and it could be featured in a future newsletter!*



## The Important Role of Kinship Caregivers

feature

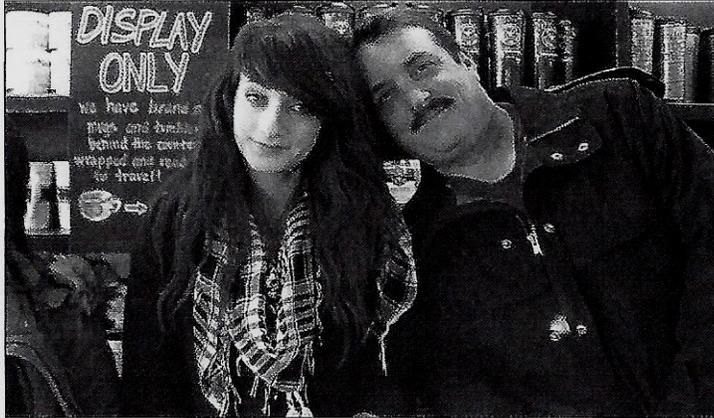
BY BOB RUBLE

I first heard the word kinship/relative caregiver 16 years ago when I stepped in to care for my niece. Kindra was 8 years old when I brought her into my home. At that time, I was pretty much left on my own to navigate the child welfare system. This was a formal case and at the time I was not required to be licensed. The system seemed unprepared to help and support me.

As an uncle, a single male with no children of my own, I ran into some things that I did not anticipate. It seemed no one could understand why a man was enrolling her in school or taking her to the doctor, dentist and optometrist. I was questioned about this a few times. My proof of our relationship at the time was a single sheet of paper called a "placement agreement" that explained who I was and why there was not a female doing all this.

I managed to get through all that, but I became very aware that I would always be looked at with suspicion.

My sister, Kindra's biological mother, was unable to complete reunification and Kindra's father had not been seen or heard from since the detention hearing two years earlier. I chose to become Kindra's legal guardian. I felt that adoption was not the right choice as she was now 10 years old and I did not want to disrupt an already fragile situation. Kindra was exposed to many traumatic situations in her first eight years and they were starting to come to the surface.



Bob Ruble with his niece Kindra, whom he raised since she was 8 years old. Photo courtesy Bob Ruble

She graduated from high school and I was so proud that both she — and I — made it. She is now almost 24 and in her last year of college. Although I was met with suspicion just because I was a single male, for me the journey was well worth it. Uncles, fathers and grandfathers are just as capable as anyone to raise a young child.

### NFPA NATIONAL FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

All was going well until about age 12. That is when all hell broke loose. A combination of puberty, junior high school and her early trauma collided, which was another situation I was unprepared for! The lovable 8-year-old became something I no longer recognized. Luckily, I remembered I could find help for us and sought out therapy. It was a challenge trying to get the system to be responsive, but we finally got the help we needed.

I was also lucky as Kindra had a great friend and both her parents were supportive and trusted me. We worked together getting the kids where they needed to be. I guess I became a soccer mom. I wanted Kindra to have some normalcy and had on many occasions let her spend the night at her friend's house. But I was uncomfortable letting her friend spend the night. Kindra's friend's parents fully trusted me but I was super aware now and would have to make special arrangements to have my female friend spend the night when Kindra's friend stayed over. This worked and allowed her to do normal things.

As I look back now I see that there were few supports set up for kinship caregivers. It would have been better if there was some type of education on how the child welfare system works. And definitely on trauma.

The National Foster Parent Association continues to be a respected national voice for foster, kinship and adoptive families through networking, education and advocacy. The organization is seeking to expand its role to support and guide kinship/relative caregivers more in the future. ☺

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Bob Ruble has been the primary caregiver for his niece since she was 8 years old when she was removed from her mother's care. Ruble eventually became his niece's guardian after reunification with her birth mother failed. Today, Ruble's niece is 24 and attending college, and he is proud of the young woman she has become. Ruble has also become an important voice for kinship families in his local area through his work with Children and Family Services and organizing kinship recognition events. Ruble has started his own nonprofit and started offering support for other kinship caregivers. He is also the president of the National Kinship Alliance.

# Adoption ANNOUNCEMENTS!



Phillip and Tracey Sprague have added 3 wonderful children to their family! Jayce was welcomed on May 15, 2015 then on March 6, 2019, Anthony and Anessa were added to their ever growing family!



We are thrilled to have legalized the adoption of our grandson Nathan Putnam on Jan 16, 2019. He's been living with us for 9 of his 10 years. Both of Nathan's parents have suffered from the disease of addiction and we thank them for doing the most difficult thing ever, allowing us to adopt him. Nathan is lucky to have loving biological parents who are involved in his life as well as 3 beautiful half sisters. We are lucky to now officially have Nathan as our grandson/son! Our adult son asked if Nathan was his nephew or his brother, and we all had a good laugh.

Nancy & Jim Vachon

*Have you recently legalized an adoption? Would you like to share the exciting news with others? AFFM would love to create an adoption announcement in the Family Ties newsletter. Send a write up and photo (if you wish) to [meagan@affm.net](mailto:meagan@affm.net).*

*Did you know that after you've adopted you are still able to access AFFM's support services? Call AFFM today to learn about post adoption support!*

# Celebrate Foster Care Awareness Month this May

## On Saying Goodbye– By Judy Dore

*Oh! Child of mine*

*For just a little while*

*I touched your face*

*And watched you smile*

*Up at me with adoring trust*

*Trust that one day will break*

*your heart-never knowing why*

*Oh! Temporary child of mine*

*With your first vocal attempts*

*Regarding life I try simply to answer*

*With a hug and a squeeze*

*My heart knowing*

*I must give you back without answers*

*Leaving only questions in your eyes*

*Oh! Little child of mine*

*Your tender age will be your salvation-but my demise*

*A part of you will always be within my being*

*A piece of you will always be void-unable to understand the wisdom of those who've acted in your "best interest"*

*Oh! Foster child, for only a moment in time I've held you*

*Protected and nurtured a child not mine by birth. Granted memories, brief of happy times to linger always*

*Unknowingly you'll carry a love*

*Unconditional, pure and gentle*

*From a family not*

*To be remembered*

*I must bid you farewell, little one,*

*With each shoe and sock*

*I pack. Letting go is painful. Tears flow unchecked as I fold the last undershirt*

*Envious of its place upon your being*

*Hurting in every fiber of mine*

*I wish you love in and of life. Farewell little one!*

AFFM would like to extend our deepest gratitude towards all resource families in Maine! Everyday you go above and beyond for the children in your home and play such an important role in their lives. Whether you are in the process of reunifying a child with their bio family, transitioning them to a new home, or in the process of adopting, you have made an impact on them. We know this is not always an easy road to go down and there will most certainly be bumps along the way – but even knowing this, you continue to provide love, support and



safety for a child. For this we say thank you! Thank you for opening your hearts and homes. Thank you for being selfless and caring with everything you have. You are true unsung heroes and deserve to be celebrated beyond the month of May. Thank you for all you do!!



## Would You Like to Contribute an Article to the Family Ties Newsletter?

AFFM would love to hear from you! Do you have an upcoming event or activity that you'd like to share? Are you a professional that is interested in sharing information pertaining to the child welfare system? Please send all submissions to [meagan@affm.net](mailto:meagan@affm.net) and you may be featured in an upcoming newsletter!

# AFFM Statewide Support Groups



*At times meetings are cancelled due to weather and other unforeseen circumstances, cancellation notices are sent out via AFFM 's email list serve and Facebook. Families are urged to call or email [info@affm.net](mailto:info@affm.net) to be added to this service. For more information and to RSVP for the support groups please call AFFM @ 827-2331. AFFM asks families to RSVP 3-4 days in advance so the facilitator and childcare provider can plan accordingly.*

**Key: A= Adoptive F=Foster K= Kinship PG= Permanency Guardianship CC= Childcare**

**Auburn** – A/F/K/CC: 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month from 6:00 – 8:00 pm at Opportunity Enterprises, *use the back door* (400 Center St. Auburn)

**Augusta** – Kinship only/CC: 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month from 5:30 – 8:00 pm at the Augusta Elks Lodge (397 Civic Center Dr.) call Jan Partridge at 207-495-3864. A potluck is provided at this group.

**Augusta** – A/F/K/CC: 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm at Magic Years Center (25 Industrial Drive).

**Augusta** – A/PG/CC: 2nd Friday of the month from 6:00-7:30 pm at the Buker Community Center (22 Armory Street).

**Bangor** – A/PG/CC: 2nd Tuesday of the month from 6:00-7:30 PM at the Redeemer Lutheran Church (540 Essex Street).

**Belfast** – A/F/K/CC: 2nd Monday of the month from 5:30-7:00pm at Christ The King Church Room 330 (9 Field Street).

**Biddeford** – Kinship only/CC: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 10:00–Noon at J Richard Martin Community Center (189 Alfred Street).

**Bridgton** – A/F/K/CC: 3rd Monday of the month from 6:30 – 8:30 pm at the Community Center (Behind Reny's) (15 Depot St)

**Brunswick** – A/F/K/CC: 4th Tuesday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30pm at St Paul's Episcopal Church (27 Pleasant St).

**Caribou** – A/F/K: 4th Monday of the month from 10:00am-noon at Caribou CHCS, 7 Hatch Drive #120. No RSVP needed.

**Damariscotta** – A/F/K: 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month from 5:30-7:00 PM at the Lincoln County Assembly of God Church (672 Main Street).

**Dover-Foxcroft** – A/F/K/CC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm at Mayo Regional Hospital, Borestone & Sebec conference room (897 W Main Street).

**Ellsworth** – A/F/K/CC: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 5:30 – 7:30 pm at Moore Community Center (133 State St.)

**Farmington** – A/F/K/CC: every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 6 – 7:30 pm at the Gwilym R. Roberts Learning Center (by the administration office), UMF rooms 001 and 003

**Houlton** – A/F/K: 3rd Monday of the month from 10:00am – noon at Houlton CHCS, 2 Water Street. No RSVP needed.

**Lincoln** – A/F/K/CC: 1st Thursday of the month from 6:00–7:30PM at the Community Evangel Temple (124 River Road).

**Machias** – A/F/K/CC: 3rd Thursday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm @ University of Maine Machias Torrey Hall Rooms 228 & 230 (116 Obrien Ave).

**Orono** – A/F/K/CC: 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month from 6:00-7:30pm at the Orono United Methodist Church (36 Oak Street).

**Presque Isle** – A/F/K/CC: 3rd Tuesday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm at the Wesleyan Church (387 Centerline Road).

**Rockland** – A/F/K/CC: 1st Wednesday of the month from 5:30PM-7:00PM @ Grace Bible Fellowship (30 Sherer Lane).

**Richmond** – A/F/K/CC: 4th Tuesday of the month from 5:30PM-7:00PM at Isaac F. Umberhine Public Library (86 Main St.)

**Rumford** – A/F/K/CC: 3rd Thursday of the month from 6-7:30PM at the Rumford Public Library (56 Rumford Ave.)

**Sanford** – A/F/K/CC: 3rd Wednesday of the month from 6:00PM-8PM at Curtis Lake Church (38 Westview Drive)

**Skowhegan** – A/F/K/CC: 2nd Thursday of the month from 6:00-7:30pm at the Federate Church in the Sunday school and nursery rooms (13 Island Ave.)

**South Portland** – A/F/K/CC: 2nd Tuesday of the month from 6:00-7:30pm at Eastpoint Church (345 Clarks Pond Pkwy).

**Wells** – A/F/K/CC: 4th Tuesday of the month from 6:00-7:30pm at Wells Congregational Church (1695 Post Road).

**Windham** – A/PG/CC: 4th Thursday of the month from 6-7:30pm at the Windham Assembly of God (1050 Roosevelt Trail).

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## Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine, Inc. & The Kinship Program

***New Resource Families Welcome! You are now receiving the Family Ties newsletter as part of your complimentary membership to AFFM! Below are all the ways you can connect with AFFM and learn more about services offered.***

**Locations:** 34 Main Street, Orono, Maine

333 Lincoln Street, Saco. Maine

**Phone:** 207-827-2331

**Email:** [info@affm.net](mailto:info@affm.net)

**Website:** [www.affm.net](http://www.affm.net)

**Like us on Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Adoptive-and-Foster-Families-of-Maine-Inc/>

**[Save a tree, sign up for the E-Newsletter!](#)**