



CHEROKEE COUNTY FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATION

From The President

I would like to thank everyone for their help in making our first fundraiser of the year a success. We were able to raise \$174 from the Dining To Donate function at Applebee's. We hope you had a good time and we will be doing more fundraisers this year and would love for those who can participate to join us. In my experience so far, I have found it to be a great way to get to know other foster parents in a more relaxed atmosphere.

April's class on Sexual Abuse was a great success as well. The feedback from those who attended was very positive. We would like to offer this class again this fall for those who could not come. The children had a great time as well seeing the fire truck and police car and getting to ask questions.

We would like to show our appreciation to the Cherokee County DFCS staff for providing us with an enjoyable meal and fellowship last night. We would like to offer our congratulations to **Joey and Alicia Price** on being named the "Resource Parents of the Year"!! They are a great inspiration for those of us not able to take in teenagers.

If you haven't been to one of our meetings this year try to make an effort to come. We have a good membership and we are really trying to make this association a better one and we can't do it without you. To encourage socializing we are going to start doing a potluck each month. Bring a covered dish to share with everyone. It doesn't have to be fancy. We will have pizza for the kids. You will get 2 training hours each month and we make every effort to get experienced speakers to come out. The topics we discuss are the same sort of information you would find at the annual Conference. For those who like the Open Forum "Fostering - Parent to Parent" we will be doing this again as many of you liked this format and found it to be very helpful. Come meet your neighbors. Won't you like to know who lives near you? These ones can be a resource for you during emergencies and it helps the children in the event you have to be gone overnight the children can continue to go to their school without any interruptions. You can now find us on [FaceBook](#) come join the group. This is a great place to talk to each other and ask questions. Look for us under groups/Atlanta Area then Cherokee. [Check out the back page of the newsletter for the link to the group.](#)

We have a new addition to our monthly newsletter that I would like to feature, we are going to start a series of articles on different issues or diseases. The articles will be written by a fellow foster parent Mrs. Shannon Griffiss, she has a BS in Early Childhood Education and Special Education and is a Reading Specialist. She has been teaching special education for 2 years.

Cherokee County Foster Adoptive & Parent

May 2009
Issue 47

Inside this issue:

Letter from President	1
Featured Speaker for April	1
Featured Article	2 & 3
Announcements	4
Julie's Corner	4
Message from D'Anna	5
Events & News	6
Association Information	7

Featured Speaker for May 21st Meeting, 7pm - 9pm

Adoption and DFCS: Beginning to End and then Some

Crysti Pynne Resource Advisor to the GA Centers of Adoption & Foster Care will provide an overview of the State of Georgia Adoption, outline the model of services currently provided, and facilitate an exchange of ideas on how the state can best address the needs of adoptive families. The participant will be able to gain an awareness of how Georgia has responded to the pre/post needs of adoptive families, learn how to access free adoption materials and trainings, and gain an awareness of Georgia's foster parent adoption policies.

This presentation on adopting a child from DFCS takes you from the point the child comes into state custody to when the child is adopted, and the support you can expect post adoption. This class will include information regarding adoption subsidy and post adoption benefits that are provided to the adoptive families.

Caring for Children with Disabilities: Autism

By: Shannon Griffis

What is Autism?

Autism is a disorder in the brain that decreases a person's ability to communicate and recognize well known social cues. People diagnosed with Autism can have varying severities to their condition. This is what is referred to as "The Autism Spectrum." This spectrum can range from mild to rather severe. Characteristics of a person with Autism may include: lack of eye contact, parroting words, a need for a very strict schedule of events, lack of interest in the world and/or people around them, appearing to be "in their own world," negative reactions to physical contact, repetitious behaviors, sensitivity to some or all of the five senses, and a high tolerance for pain (autisminfo.com, 2007).

Who can have Autism?

Autism occurs in 1 out of every 150 children. It has been diagnosed in every race, social class, and ethnic group. It occurs in both boys and girls, although it is nearly 4 times more likely to appear in boys. Autistic signs can be diagnosed as early as 6 months, though a common window for this diagnosis is before the age of 3 (autismspeaks.org, 2009).

How can I help a child with Autism?

Early intervention is immeasurably important. Since there is no known cure for Autism, it is important to get as much help as you can as early as you can. New therapies and treatments are being discovered every day. Because Autism has so many different levels, not every treatment works for every child, but don't lose hope. Get educated! Learn all that you can. The more educated you are, the more you can help! Your first form of action should be to get your child in touch with a good physician. From there, depending on age and severity, the child can be referred for treatment or helpful programs, such as *Babies Can't Wait*, for services that will help you and the child to work together to make a positive change.

Here are a few parenting tips for working with a child who have Autism:

1. **Keep a good schedule:** Many children with Autism have a "need" to know what is going to happen in their day. Making a schedule of planned events for the day is a great way to give them the structure they need. If the child is too young to read, make a picture schedule.
2. **Inform the child of a change in plans:** If you just remembered that you need to go to the grocery store before going home, and this wasn't on your original schedule, a child with Autism may get upset. They have a fear of the unknown. Talk to the child let them know how this grocery store trip fits into their day.
3. **Provide choices:** These children usually have trouble with abstract thinking. For example, telling them to "go play" may be too much for them to process. Instead give them choices. "You can play with the blocks or you can read a book." This is more concrete to them and makes it easier for them to choose.
4. **Demonstrate and practice desired behaviors:** Things that seem second nature to you can be completely foreign to these kids. For example, if you know you are going to the movies, and you don't want them to talk during the film, practice it at home. Explain why you don't talk during a movie and give the child an

Continued.....Caring for Children with Disabilities: Autism

opportunity to practice before you go. This same technique can be used for nearly anything new to them or for modeling desired behaviors during everyday activities.

5. **Explain your feelings:** Your feelings may be written all over your face, but to many children with Autism it all looks the same. "The Mom Look" usually doesn't work on these kids. Instead, explain how their behavior makes you feel. "When you ... it makes me feel.... I would like it better if you would..."

Below you will find different resources and materials to help your child.

Resources

Websites:

<http://www.autismspeaks.org>

<http://www.autisminfo.com>

<http://www.autism-society.org>

Books for kids:

A Is for Autism, F Is for Friend: A Kid's Book on Making Friends With a Child Who Has Autism by Joanna L Keating

The Autism Acceptance Book: Being a Friend to Someone with Autism by Ellen Sabin

Since We're Friends: An Autism Picture Book by Celeste Shally and David Harrington

Books for adults:

The Autism Answer Book: More Than 300 of the Top Questions Parents Ask by William Stillman

Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew by Ellen Notbohm

1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders
by Veronica Zysk and Ellen Notbohm

Announcements & Congratulations!



This month we had one family adopt a child and she found his forever family. Please help us congratulate Josh and Mandie Lewis and their new daughter Miss Jennifer Lewis on Monday the 11th!

Julie's Corner

I want to thank everyone who attended the Foster Parent Appreciation Banquet last night! I had a wonderful time, and I hope you all did as well! We are going to develop a survey to get your feedback about how you think things went, and suggestions for next year....I'll be sending that out soon!

Congratulations to Joey and Alicia Price on being named the "Resource Parents of the Year"!! Joey and Alicia have accepted three teenage girls in their home and they have incorporated these girls into their families and I have personally been able to witness their growth and change! The Price's are active in their community and they attend Macedonia Baptist Church where they are involved with youth and children's ministries. They are also very involved in missions work through their church. Alicia is the ROTC instructor at Cherokee High School and both Joey and Alicia are retired from the military. Their volunteer work through the Angel House led them to know the girls that they came through IMPACT for and have since brought into their home. The Price's are a wonderful, stable, loving family that has provided a haven to girls that would have otherwise "aged out of care" or stayed in the group home until they were 18. Congratulations Joey and Alicia, you guys are truly an inspiration!

Congratulations to Jim and Heather Ousley and Robert and Tina Word for turning in their training hours! They received 25 dollar gift cards from EMBRACE! Remember it is almost half way through the year and time has gone by so fast! Many of you that attended the conference in Jekyll have completed your hours, but there are still families that need to get to work on those! Be sure to complete your training hours so you're not in a scramble in December! Please remember that your CPR certification needs to remain current--and you can be reimbursed for the cost of the course!

We had a IMPACT class graduate on 4/30 and there will be a number of good resources from that class! We have a class beginning this Thursday and we look forward to getting to know these families!

Lou Shewmake is now a trained IMPACT co-trainer! Lou attended her IMPACT "train the trainer" course in downtown Atlanta and is now certified to co-lead the course. Linda and I are very excited to have her join us in teaching these classes to our potential resources!

May is foster parent appreciation month and I hope you know how much I appreciate everything you do for the children in your home! The love and care you show for the children is evident and you guys do not get the praise and "thanks" you all deserve for the difficult work you do! Thank you on behalf of the Resource Development staff, and the rest of the staff at Cherokee DFCS for your devotion to the children!

Thanks,

Julie M. Evans, SSCM
Cherokee County Department
of Family and Children Services
770-720-3650

Message from D'Anna



Foster Care ~ Change a Lifetime

May is National Foster Care Month. No matter how much time you have to give, you can do something positive that will *Change a Lifetime* for a child in need. Like all children, youth in foster care deserve and benefit from enduring relationships with caring adults. Across the country, people just like you are helping these youth build brighter futures by serving as their foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, advocates, social workers and volunteers.

During the month of May, we celebrate and appreciate you for what you do for the children of Cherokee County. In April, we took custody of 9 children, 3 boys and 6 girls. 5 of these children were from ages 0-5, 2 were ages 6-12, and 2 were 13 years old and over. 4 of these children were white, 4 were Hispanic, and 1 was African American. 8 of these children came from CPS (6 from the investigator petitioning the court and 2 directly from the court). 1 child came from Family Preservation Services (CPS Ongoing). There were 2 of these 9 children who re-entered care. 6 of these children were placed in Cherokee DFCS foster homes, 1 child was placed with a relative, 1 child was placed in a group home, and 1 child was in a hospital setting. There was 1 sibling group of 2 children and 1 teenager with her baby. 1 child was returned at the 72-hour hearing and 2 children were returned at the 10-day hearing. You may remember that in March 26 children were placed in our custody, so there was a significant decrease in removals in April.

We currently we have 83 approved foster homes in Cherokee County. We had 4 homes close in April for the following reasons:

- Family really wanted to adopt a child between the ages of 0-3 and decided to look at other options
- Finalization of adoption occurred on 04/13/09
- Finalization of adoption occurred on 03/09/09 and the family decided to close their home
- Family was opened for specific children until they were ready for adoption. Children were finally moved into an adoptive home.

We approved 5 new homes in April, congratulations to full approval status to:

- Birt and Karmen Binion
- Michael and Becky Borgia
- Monty and Leigh Hepner
- Rick and Robin Sheppard
- Bart and Faith Sims

The most recent Impact training class graduated on May 7 and their studies are in process.

Congratulations to Joey and Alicia Price, 2009 Cherokee Resource Parents of the Year, awarded at the May 12 Foster Parent Banquet. We had a great turn out and we are hopeful you enjoyed the evening.

Please let me know your issues and concerns. I appreciate the feedback as this information helps create a stronger partnership between us. You can email me at: dkliber@dhr.state.ga.us.

I continue to look forward to many great things to happen for you and for the children and families in Cherokee County. Thank you again for your valuable service to the children and families.

D'Anna Liber (Director)
770-720-3629
dkliber@dhr.state.ga.us

Up Coming Events

Summer Camps - If you are interested in enrolling your children in summer camp let your case manager know. If you are looking for camps go to our website <http://www.fosteroradopt.org/Links.htm> to find a camp in this area. There so many camps that we could not list them all.



Culture Camp 2009 - June 9th - 11th

Children from around the world gather to share their common experiences in a traditional camp setting on the shores of beautiful Lake Allatoona. Culture Camp serves internationally adopted children entering 2nd grade through high school. For more information contact Cheryl Jenkins at 706-232-3417 or email cwj1956@aol.com or Joyce King at 78-770-0026 or email- pking317@aol.com.



June 22-26 "[Royal Family Kids Camp](#)" Cherokee County Foster Children age 7 - 11 are eligible to attend for free. Call your case manager to reserve a spot.



The next adoption gathering and videoconference is scheduled to be hosted in the gym at Macon State College on Saturday, August 22. Contact your case manager for details.



Relationship Enhancement for Adoptive Parents - "To Serenity & Back"

In Atlanta, GA at the Comfort Suites on June 27-28, 2009. For more information or to register, please call 770-274-3007. Earn 12 training hours at the completion of the weekend. Sponsored by Bethany Christian Services <http://www.bethany.org>. This is available to Adoptive Families.

CPR & FIRST AID CLASSES AVAILABLE

Please contact Jeff Blackwell at jblackwell@firstactioncpr.com or 770-652-9051 to register for either an individual class or group training. Foster parent should look for the Heart Saver CPR Course, he uses the AHA curriculum. For those who need specialized training he offers a wide variety of classes, check out the web site at www.firstactioncpr.com.



CPR & First Aid Classes are reimbursable with an ORIGINAL receipt. Certification is good for 2 years. You will receive training hours for the class.

Cherokee County Foster Adoptive & Parent Association



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

Meetings are on the Third Thursday of each month. This month we are meeting on May 21st at the First Baptist Church of Woodstock. The meetings are from 7pm - 9pm. We meet in Bldg "A" room 240 on the second floor. Bring a covered dish for Potluck, drinks will be provided. We will have pizza for the kids. Check website calendar for map and directions.

Check out our web site at www.fosteroradopt.org for upcoming events and announcements. 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.

You can RSVP here for upcoming meetings & make a note of what your bringing so others can see. Click link below.

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



Board Members

PRESIDENT

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

VICE PRESIDENT

Jimmy Duncan

SECRETARY

Debbie Earle

TREASURER

Mary Duncan

Other Associations or Support Foundations

Foster Care Support Foundation

located on Alpharetta Hwy in Roswell, 770-641-9591
Email: Rachel Ewald racewald@hotmail.com or visit www.fostercare.org.



Contact Laveda Moore Doxey or Beverly Miles at 404-929-0401 or visit www.familiesfirst.org.

Embrace Cherokee

Foster Parent Liaison Amy Blanton @ info@embracecherokee.com or visit them on the web www.embracecherokee.com.