

HOMEFINDING

HERALD

AUG/ SEPT 2011

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

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RESOURCE PARENT RECOGNITION EVENT

By Dagoberto Gavidia

On May 20, 2011, the Homefinding Unit hosted the annual Resource Parent Recognition event. The event honors the selfless service that San Mateo County's resource parents provide to the county's dependent children and their families. This year's theme was "An Italian Evening" and it was hosted at the Holbrook Palmer Park in Atherton. The event was well attended by resource families and staff. A delicious dinner of Italian cuisine was served by San Mateo County's own VRS Program. The jovial Italian music of Ron Borelli's accordion, accompanied by a clarinet player, set the mood for the evening. It was not unusual to find a child or two dancing to the tunes of Ron and his musical partner as they strolled through the venue. Other than their spontaneous dancing, the children were entertained by face painting, shaped balloons, the Lizard Lady, and a bouncy / jumper structure. All present had an enjoyable evening. Special thanks to Deborah Torres for her words of encouragement and recognition to our

resource parents, and to Pravin Patel for his presence and support throughout the event. Also, a big thanks to the Help One Child volunteer and to all the Family and Services staff whom contributed with their planning and time to this event.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER:

Hello Resource Parents,

I'm hoping that this summer you are all finding time to enjoy the warm weather, take local trips and experience the many beautiful sites within our own San Mateo County. There are numerous parks and community events that provide fun-filled activities for the entire family.

You may also be aware that recently there was a Foster Family Home rate increase for licensed foster homes. This increase was retroactive to May 1st and varies based on the age of the child in placement. This increase was a result of a lawsuit that was brought on behalf of licensed foster family homes and does not order an increase to any other programs for benefits. Please contact your child's Social Worker and you'll be referred to the Eligibility Worker if you have any questions.

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It has also been a little over a year since I moved into my position as Director of Children and Family Services. I have had an opportunity to meet with some of you at the Foster Parents' meeting and other Resource Parent Holiday and Recognition events. I am aware of the very important role you have in caring for our children in San Mateo County. In this coming year I am hoping to get to know you all better and to have an opportunity to meet with you more frequently to get your feedback and ideas how we can enhance our working together with the goal of providing the most effective services to children and families. We've had a year of transitions due to budget reductions and we will continue to have reductions as we address the county's structural deficit. I am hopeful that we will continue to work together while we address these budget issues, always prioritizing the important needs of the children and families we serve. I look forward to meeting with you more frequently this year at various events and always welcome hearing from you directly. I can be reached at dltorres@co.smchsa.org. Enjoy your summer,

Deborah Torres



SAN MATEO COUNTY CHILDREN NEED YOUR HELP

Current Foster Parents:
We currently have a great need for families to provide these services:

- Willing to provide care for kids ages 12 through 17
- Willing to provide respite for other foster parents
- Willing (and able) to provide care for sibling groups (2 to 3 children)

If you are willing to assist in any of these areas, please contact me.

Matt Radisch
Homefinding Unit Supervisor
MRadisch@co.sanmateo.ca.us
(650) 802-7637

Families Interested in Becoming Foster Parents:

More foster parents of diverse backgrounds are needed to fit foster children's needs:

- More foster parents, especially of diverse ethnic backgrounds, are needed to provide a family home environment for youths who cannot live with their parents.
- More foster parents are needed who will meet the needs of sibling groups, older youths, and medically fragile infants and children.

San Mateo County offers foster parents a comprehensive array of support services, such as:

- Support groups and trainings
- Mentoring program
- Respite care financial reimbursement
- Child care assistance and referrals for working foster parents
- Referrals to community resources
- A Foster Parent Liaison
- A Foster Parent Advocate
- Funding to attend foster care conferences and conventions
- Hosting of meeting space for Foster Parent Association meetings
- Recognition events

To find out how to become a foster parent in San Mateo County, call Dagoberto Gavidia San Mateo County

Foster Care Recruiter, Dagoberto Gavidia San Mateo County Foster Care Recruiter, at (650) 802-7648 or e-mail him at DGavidia@co.sanmateo.ca.us or visit www.smchsa.org for orientation dates.

C&FS Policy Updates

Drop-Side Crib Recall and Ban

Last year, the U.S. Consumer Protection Safety Commission (CPSC) recalled several models of drop-side cribs after approximately 30 infant deaths were attributed to their use. A federal ban on the sale of all drop-side cribs was enacted this year, and CPSC recently issued the rules and regulations that spell out compliance dates for child care centers and places of public accommodation.

Some of you have been asking whether and how soon this new law might affect the continued use of drop-side cribs in Foster Family Homes. A recent Q & A blog post by CPSC regarding the ban indicates that the new requirements do not apply to Foster Family Homes. As such, we don't anticipate that there will be new regulations requiring foster care givers to remove these cribs from their homes.

Knowing what we now know about the dangers associated with their use, however, we strongly encourage all of you who are currently using a drop side crib in your home to replace it with a crib that meets the new federal safety standards. If it would be a financial hardship to do so, you can also check with the retailer or manufacturer of the crib about purchasing an "immobilizer" that many of them are now making available. This device will keep the drop-side in place, and significantly reduce the risk of accidental injury to an infant.

The link to the CPSC blog and Q&A is : <http://www.cpsc.gov/onsafety/2011/06/the-new-crib-standard-questions-and-answers/>



CHILD HEALTH & WELLNESS CORNER

BACK TO SCHOOL (Adapted from "Your Back-to-School Checklist"-by Zrinka Peters)

Immunizations/Health Exams:

Ensure that children have up-to date immunizations, physical exams and dental exams. There is new requirement that all children entering 7th through 12th grade have a Tdap vaccination. Up-to-date immunization records must be provided to the school upon enrollment, although foster children cannot be barred from admission due to lack of immunizations or missing immunization records. Have your child's vision and hearing tested. If the child wears glasses, make sure the prescription is current. Also, ensure that emergency numbers are up-to-date. If the child is scratching her scalp, check for head lice. If you suspect a learning disability or dyslexia, speak to the teacher or school learning center.

Special health concerns: All special medical needs must be addressed with the school. Medication requirements and an emergency care plan should be in place before the school year begins. Ensure that the school nurse or the child's teacher has the necessary instructions for special care regarding a specific condition.

Child's mental health: Spend time every day listening and talking about what is happening in your child's life. Nurture confidence and self-esteem with praise and encouragement. Give children unconditional love. Give appropriate guidance and discipline when necessary. Provide a safe and secure environment.

Sleep considerations: Going back to school means earlier bedtimes and earlier mornings. Start gradually easing into an earlier bed time a few weeks before school starts. Make it easier on the child by doing some of the work the night before, such as setting out clothes for the next day.

Healthy eating: Make sure children start the day off right with a healthy breakfast. Studies show that children who eat breakfast are more alert in class. Keep healthy food options on hand. Pack easy-to-carry veggies, lean meats, fruits, dairy products, whole grains and snacks to keep energy levels high throughout the day. Limit cheese on sandwiches and choose low fat varieties and make sandwiches with whole grain bread instead of white bread. Limit snack foods and baked treats. Choose low -fat or 1% milk. Select 100% juice, not juice drinks.

Backpack weight: It is recommended that a child's backpack weigh no more than 10-15% of his or her bodyweight, in order to reduce back pain or injury. Pack heavier items closest to the center of the back. Kids' backpacks can cause back, shoulder, and neck pain when they are too heavy and worn for long hours. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons recommends choosing a rolling or lightweight backpack that has a padded back and shoulder straps, and a waist strap.

Help to reduce first-day anxiety: It is helpful to talk with children about what to expect on the first day, choosing a

special outfit, packing all necessary supplies, and preparing a lunch the night before.

Help to get to school safely: If the child rides the bus, tell child to wait patiently (not playing on curb) and board bus, sitting quietly in the seat and following directions of the driver. If the child walks to school, make sure they are with friends. They should walk on the main sidewalks and not take shortcuts through woods or empty lots. Teach children how to cross the street, following the directions of the crossing guard. Teach children not to talk to strangers and give your children a whistle to blow if they are in danger. Make sure children wears a seat belt if driven to school, even if the school is nearby. If the child bikes to school, make sure he or she wears a helmet. If the child fears other people he or she may meet on the way to school, help plan other routes or talk to the school principal. Make sure the school knows how to contact you if the child does not show up for school. Teach the child how to contact you in a hurry.

Developing good homework and study habits: Create an environment that is conducive to doing homework. Set aside ample time for homework. Establish a household rule that the TV set stays off during homework time. Supervise computer and internet use. Set up cell phone and computer curfews as needed and develop a plan of usage. Be willing to take the items away the child if he or she cannot stick to the plan. Be available to answer questions and offer assistance, but never do a child's homework for her. Take steps to minimize eye, neck and brain fatigue while studying. If a child is struggling with a particular subject and you aren't able to help, discuss issue with the child's teacher.

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MONTHLY MEETINGS/ GROUPS



Foster Parent Association Meetings:
6:30 PM-8:30 PM

Dates: Aug 9th, Sept 13th

Meetings are held at 400 Harbor, building B in the Notre Dame Room from 6:30- 8:30pm. All foster, adoptive and kinship caregivers are warmly welcome to attend. Dinner and childcare are provided. To RSVP please call or email Shauna at (650) 685-8166 or shaunapp@yahoo.com.

Foster Parent Executive Board Meetings:
9:30 AM-11:30 AM

Dates: Aug 8th, Sept 12th

Shelter Care Support Group:
Host: LaToya Faulkner, (650) 573-3670

The Shelter care Support Group has been suspended due to the lack of participation. LaToya Faulkner will like to hear from all shelter care providers in order to determine when would be the best date and time for the group meeting to take place. Please contact LaToya with your input.

Medically Fragile Care Support Group:
Host: Rose Palos-Kessler, MFC
Coordinator
400 Harbor Blvd., Belmont, CA 94002.
Phone: (650) 802-7624
9:30 AM-11:30 AM

Dates:
Aug 1, Sept 12
NOTRE DAME ROOM 9:30-11:30 A.M.
Building B

Please RSVP by phone or email (rkessler@smchsa.org) the prior Friday so I will ensure we have the appropriate amount of refreshments

Adolescent/Foster Parent Support Group:
Host: Diane Carleson (650) 341-8520
346 Sylvan Ave., San Mateo, CA 94403
geminidvc@aol.com
6:30 PM (Dinner Included)

Dates: Aug 15, Sept 12

Please contact Diane Carleson at (650) 341-8520 for additional information.

RESOURCE PARENT EDUCATION & RESOURCES

CPR/First Aid For 2011

The following are the dates and times for CPR/First Aid classes for 2011 provided by (Free, provided by CFS)

- **Wednesday, August 10, 2011, 400 Harbor Blvd. Bldg. B, Notre Dame Room.**
- **Thursday October 13, 2011, Redwood City, 2500 Middlefield Road, Redwood/Oak Rooms**

If you are interested in attending the CPR/First Aid Class offered by HSA. You must contact Matt Radisch at (650) 802-7637 so he can sign you in.

CPR/First Aid Classes Offered by Community Based Organizations (Updated 9/09)

The following are resources for CPR/ First Aid class. Remember the class you take must include infant and child CPR/ First Aid. If you need childcare, please be sure to check with the agency you pick to see if that is something they offer.

Projectheartbeat.com

Their classes run on various days and times of the week at different locations,

so please contact them via email or at (510) 452-1100 for detailed information on upcoming classes. Their class is eight hours long and the cost is \$70.00 per person.

Redcrossbayarea.org

Their classes are run on various days Monday through Friday. Some are held during the day, and others are split up between two evenings. Their course is six-and-a-half hours long and the cost is \$65.00 per person. To access please go to the website and pick the "Get Trained" section on the website, which will allow you to get information on the upcoming classes. These classes are held in Burlingame.

Helponechild.org

Their classes are generally conducted on the third Saturday of each month, and there is no class for the month of December. Their class is five hours long and usually runs from 8:30a.m. -1:30p.m. The cost for their class is \$65.00 per person. Their classes are held at 858 University Avenue, Los Altos. You may also contact them by telephone at 888-KID-HOPE (888-543-4673).

Healtheducationservices.net

These classes are held at the Kaiser in Redwood City and in Santa Clara. Their class is eight-and-a-half hours long, and costs \$56.00 per person. However, there is an additional \$10.00 per person for licensed daycare providers. Their classes are usually held one Saturday per month or two nights during the week.

www.Getice.com/cpr-training

Their course is run from 8:30a.m.- 5:00p.m., eight-and-a-half hours, at a cost of \$70.00 per person. Their classes are held at 43236 Christy Street, Fremont. This course provides all the essential skills needed, and there is no test at the end of the course.



On-line Training

You may also choose to take an on-line CPR/First Aid training. Please note that this option is only acceptable if you are renewing your certification. The advantages of on-line training include lower cost and convenience.

www.firstaidweb.com

www.cprtoday.com

www.emergencyuniversity.com

SERVICES FOR YOUTH

Graduation for independent living program:

Another great year for the Independent Living Program has come to an end, and it ended with a well attended celebration where we thanked our caregivers, community leaders, social workers and out youth families for their efforts in helping this amazing group of 17 young men and women in their journey to adulthood. We had one of our former graduates Reshmina Prasad, as well as Deborah Torres speak some words of wisdom to the youth.

About one hundred and fifty people attended the fun dinner and enjoyed the results of the Contest on Disproportionality where a lot of our seniors displayed their art and creativity by creating a picture of what their life in care had been like. Some used pictures from magazines, some drew their own, and some used words to describe the experience, each and every one of them told an individual, unique and touching story. The ILP team wishes to thank our manager Elaine Azzopardi for her support and in addition thank our supervisor Dorothy Torres for her assistance and encouragement in our efforts to serve our youth.

Education Success Handbook Available Online

Check out the link at:

<http://sanmateofosteryouthservices.org/dr/content/handbook-education-success-handbook>



FEATURED RECIPES

Chocolate Chip Banana Muffins:

Ingredients

- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup plain yogurt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup mashed ripe bananas
- 3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips

Directions

1. In a large bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In another bowl, combine the egg, oil, yogurt and vanilla. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Fold in bananas and chocolate chips. Fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups two-thirds full. Bake at 350 degrees F for 22-25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks.

Recipe Requests:

We know many of our resource parents are very talented cooks with all kinds of great recipes perhaps handed down from generations past. We would love

to continue showcasing some of your best recipes in upcoming issues of the Homefinding Herald. We would enjoy your best main course, side dish, dessert, basically anything your family loves! Thank you so much for being willing to share these gems with us! Please submit your recipes to:

Matt Radisch

Homefinding Unit Supervisor

400 Harbor Blvd Building B

Belmont, CA 94002

MRadisch@co.sanmateo.ca.us

(650) 802-7637

HSA FOSTER PARENT LIASON

Pravin Patel

Foster Parent Liaison

County of San Mateo, Human Services Agency

Children and Family Services

400 Harbor Boulevard, Building B
Belmont, CA 94002

Phone: (650) 802-5017

FOSTER CAREGIVER ADVOCATE

Regina Deihl, Esq.

625 Miramontes Street, Suite 201

Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

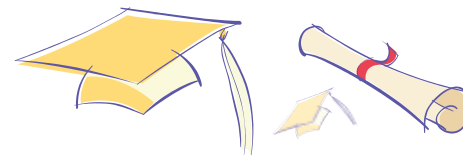
Tel: (408) 888-1250

Fax: (650) 712-1637

E-mail: rdeihl@ix.netcom.com

RESOURCE PARENT TRAINING GRADUATES

From March to June 2011, 24 participants completed the Resource Parent Training. Congratulations!



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RECRUITMENT- WANT TO EARN? \$500

As a Resource Parent, you are eligible to earn \$500 from the Homefinding Unit for recruiting a family that becomes licensed and eligible to receive a placement of a foster child in San Mateo County. This is only available for recruiting families who obtain an "open license" and not for approved/relative families or foster/adopt homes. When the family you are working with contacts the Agency, be sure and tell them to let the Unit Representative know they were referred by you. If you have questions, please contact call Dagobetro Gavidia San Mateo County Foster Care Recruiter, at (650) 802-7648 or e-mail him at DGavidia@co.sanmateo.ca.us

TELL YOUR FRIENDS & FAMILY!

If you have friends or family that may be interested in finding out more about becoming Resource Parents, you can let them know about our informal bi-weekly orientations that are held by the Homefinding Unit. There is no commitment necessary to attend. Contact person: Dagobetro Gavidia San Mateo County Foster Care Recruiter, at (650) 802-7648 or e-mail him at DGavidia@co.sanmateo.ca.us (contact for questions and more info).

Orientation Dates and Times:

Tuesday August 2, 2011, 400 Harbor Blvd, Bldg B, Belmont, 7:00-9:30 PM

Tuesday August 16, 2011, 1487 Huntington Avenue, South San Francisco, 7:00-9:30 PM

Tuesday September 6, 2011, 400 Harbor Blvd, Bldg B, Belmont, 7:00-9:30 PM

Tuesday September 20, 2011, 2415 University Avenue, East Palo Alto, 6:00-8:30 PM

INVOLVE YOUR COMMUNITY

If you belong to a congregation, PTA, or service organization, we would like to partner with you to host an information session on the county's foster care and foster-adopt programs. If you are interested, please contact call Dagobetro Gavidia San Mateo County Foster Care Recruiter, at (650) 802-7648 or e-mail him at DGavidia@co.sanmateo.ca.us



INSPIRATION ANNEX

Cassandra's Poem

Foster children move from place to place
with memories that walk the night alone,
Nor is the love theirs that they must embrace,
Yet most survive with a peculiar grace,
Even though their hearts should turn to stone
As they move about from place to place.
Perhaps within themselves they find a space
to furnish as they would a mobile home,
Finding scraps of things they can embrace,
a memory like some much-fingered lace,
Thoughts and dreams that only they have known,
Moving as they do from place to place,

Their childhood impossible to trace,
In the years of yearning after they are grown,
Filled with love they've chosen to embrace,
yet with their losses etched upon their face,
pain for which no penance can atone.
How can they move and move from
place to place, surrendering the love they
must embrace?

Request for Submissions

The Inspiration Annex will feature an inspirational poem, story, painting or drawing in each issue. We would love to be able to use this Newsletter as a place to showcase your creative talent and things that inspire you. If you would like to submit something for the Annex that you or your child has created or something that you have found inspiring, please submit them to:

Dagobetro Gavidia San Mateo County Foster Care Recruiter, at (650) 802-7648 or e-mail him at DGavidia@co.sanmateo.ca.us

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

My STEP Experience – By Michelle K

My name is Michelle; I was an intern for STEP 2011, San Mateo County's job training and employment program for former foster youth. I am writing this letter because I have a lot of wonderful things to say about the program and why I think it should go on for many years to come. I would just like to thank everyone who made this program possible. I had a lot of fun and learned a lot.

First, I would like to share a little about myself. I had been in foster care since I was fourteen but out of my parents care since I was about five. Growing up in foster care has been a really big challenge for me. In my last four years in the foster care system, I was bounced around from group home to foster home and back to more group homes. Along with that I wasn't in the same school for more than a couple of months. I don't think I would have been able to hold a job even if I wanted to. So like a lot of my peers I was unable to learn the skills it took to keep a job, let alone get one. I learned a lot of skills in the Independent Learning Program (ILP), but for me personally, to learn a skill and get it right I have to go out and apply it in my life.



With that being said, I feel this is the number one reason to keep STEP. We take classes, we learn new skills, but the only way to get the skills right is to go out and apply them to real life situations. This program does that for us who are trying to get on our feet. This program allows us to take the skills that we learn and apply it in a professional setting. The really great part about this internship program is that if we mess up or we do something wrong, they don't just fire us. They understand that this is a learning opportunity and want to make it a positive experience for the youth in the program. Like a very wise old man once told me, "The best way to learn is from our mistakes."

For me this was a wonderful program, I was very fortunate to get an amazing job coach in the San Mateo County Purchasing Department. For my internship, I had one major project to work on and that was to update emergency vendor contacts. That consisted of looking up the companies, calling them and waiting for them to return my call. While, waiting for them to call me back I didn't have too much work to do. I didn't know how to approach my coach and I didn't want him to think that the work I was doing was uninteresting. There were so many scenarios that went through my head that I chose to not say anything. But, after having a long talk with the support system in STEP, I spoke with my job coach and asked him for more work while I waited for phone calls. Thanks to my job coach being open minded, along with being understanding, I have learned this skill. And like someone told me long ago, "If you don't give yourself the option to get rejected, how do you know you will get rejected?"

I also had a problem with my attendance. I would call in about once or twice a week. It was hard for me to go to work when I had some issues with family and friends. I had things I needed to take

care of. One skill that I did not have that I learned in this program is prioritizing my life. I never really had a job before. So for me this was a skill that I really worked on during the internship. My job coach guided me in the right way so I ended up missing less work and sorting out my family time with work time.

So these are just a couple of the skills I learned, in addition to the work experience and learning how the Purchasing Department works. In my opinion STEP is an outstanding program that helped me learn the skills that I need in my adult life. If this program weren't around I would not have effectively gained the skills that I need to be successful on the job. And, I wouldn't have known how to change or learn from my mistakes. This program helped me; just one former foster youth, imagine what it could do for all the foster youth to come!

About STEP:

For the third year in a row, the County of San Mateo Human Services Agency, in partnership with the Human Resources Department, offered it's comprehensive, paid Summer Training and Employment Program (STEP) for emancipated foster youth, which ran from April to June 2011. The program introduces emancipated foster youth to "the world of work", prepares them for future employment and enhances current County support of services for youth who have emancipated from foster care. The unique program includes four primary components:

- 1) 12 hours of job readiness skills training;
- 2) One-to-one job shadowing and employment coaching from a county employee;
- 3) Hands-on, paid work experience; and
- 4) Transition planning

Offering these youth a comprehensive employment training program is a tremendous way to fill the social and economic gaps faced by these youth and assist them in succeeding in the work place.

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Here at the Homefinding Unit, our goal is to make this Newsletter something that Resource Parents find informative, interesting and useful. We would love your involvement in helping us to reach that goal. If you are interested in submitting an article, signing up to write a monthly column, or have suggestions on making the Newsletter a better resource for parents, please contact either Matt Radisch, Homefinding Unit Supervisor, at (650) 802-7637 MRadisch@co.sanmateo.ca.us or call Dagobetro Gavidia San Mateo County Foster Care Recruiter, at (650) 802-7648 or e-mail him at DGavidia@co.sanmateo.ca.us

NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON-LINE

To access the Homefinding Herald Online please go to: www.smchsa.org You will find the Newsletter in the Children & Families Services section under Foster Care/Adoption (Left Menu).

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Homefinding Unit Supervisor
Matt Radisch
400 Harbor Blvd Building B
Belmont, CA 94002
MRadisch@co.sanmateo.ca.us
(650) 802-7637

