



A Publication of the Alabama Foster Adoptive Parent Association

Connections



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ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE SHOCCO SPRINGS CONFERENCE CENTER Talladega, Alabama May 14th, 15th, and 16th, 2009

GUEST SPEAKER DR. TONEA STEWART

"Tonea" Stewart, a native of Greenwood, Mississippi, has lived in Montgomery Alabama since 1990. She is tenured Professor and the Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts at Alabama State University. Also, she is a professional actress.

As Chair of Theatre Arts, Tonea serves as teacher, role model, and mentor to many students at ASU. Since her arrival, the number of Theatre majors, minors, and the number of graduates from the department have soared. Youth and adults from the Montgomery area and across the nation have been touched by Tonea's artistry through T.A.P.S. (Theatre Artists Performance School), Camp 3T (Teaching



Free Registration to Foster,
Adoptive, Kinship Foster Parents,
and DHR Workers.
Call Shocco Springs to Register
1-800-280-1105

Through Theatre). and ARPAC (Adult Repertory Performing Arts Camp) summer performance and enrichment camps.

After receiving a B.S. degree in Speech and Theatre from Jackson State University and an M.A. in Theatre Arts from the University of California at Santa Barbara, Tonea completed her Ph.D. in Theatre Arts at Florida State University in 1989. She was the first African American female to receive a doctorate from the FSU school of Theatre and the first McKnight Doctoral Fellow in Theatre Arts. During her study at FSU, Tonea also received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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THREE FACES OF DR. TONEA STEWART



"The Actress"



"The Professor"



As Miss Etta Gibbee
in *In the Heat of the Night*

- Native of Greenwood, MS
- Graduate of Jackson State Univ., Univ of California and Florida State Univ.
- Taught Drama and Speech, Jackson State Univ.
- Director of Theatre Arts at Alabama State Univ.
- Films, Theatre and Television

- Actress
- Directress
- Educator
- Humanitarian
- Orator



From the President of AFAPA

I dedicate this letter to foster and adoptive parents all across the state. What you are doing for the children in Alabama deserves the highest recognition possible. A few years ago AFAPA decided to stop giving individual awards for foster parents of the year and adoptive parents of the year. The main reason for that decision was because it was too hard to say that one person was doing a better job than another. I applaud you all and I would like to give you all an award for what you do. You do what you do with much adversity, and little rewards other than the satisfaction of knowing that what you do makes a difference in the life of a child. A recent survey of foster parents revealed that you don't do what you do for the money. There is not enough money to compensate you for all that you have to put up with. There are things more important than money. The right to be treated with dignity, respect, trust and value is the first right foster parents have. Foster parents want to be listened to, they want to be heard and made to feel their opinion means something. A few years ago a group of people got together and decided that Alabama foster parents deserved to have a law called the Foster Parent Bill of Rights. The beginning of this law says "The following rights have been established and the Department of Human Resources shall ensure that each foster parent be afforded the following rights". These rights were a way to say thank for what you do from the Legislature of Alabama, The Department of Human Resources, The Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, and anyone else who had a part in getting these rights established. A lot of work had gone into making sure foster parents are aware of these rights. Even with all the effort I still come across foster parents and DHR workers who are not aware of what these rights really mean. The Foster Parent Bill of Rights is posted on the www.afapa.org web site, we have included them in the Connections newsletter of couple of times, and we have included them in the Daily Journal for Foster Parents. I want to make sure that every foster parent in the state has a copy of this journal. This journal is a valuable tool to use in caring for your children. It contains not only the FPBR, it also has other valuable information you need. We have been giving them out for the past two years at all of our training events and will again this year at the Annual AFAPA conference. Our normal attendance is over 300 foster parents which is only about 10 percent of all foster parents in the state. AFAPA

will come to your county association meetings and bring journals to give out to foster parents. If for some reason you are unable to attend any of these meeting I will do what I can to get a copy of the journal to you.

This is for all you foster and adoptive parents:

The Boy and the Starfish

One morning while walking his dog along the beach, a man noticed a figure in the distance. The figure was bending down, standing up and tossing something out into the ocean. As the man drew nearer, he could see that the figure was that of a young boy. The boy was surrounded by miles of starfish that had washed ashore with the tide. One by one the boy would stoop over, gently picking up a starfish then toss it back into the water. Being a little curious, the man asked the young boy what he was doing. The boy frantically stated "sir, these starfish will surely die if they aren't returned to the sea. Can you help me?" The man scoffed as he told the youngster "there are miles and miles of starfish and you are but one small boy, do you really think you can make a difference?" With that, the boy tenderly tossed the starfish in his hand into the awaiting water and stated "I just made a difference to that one."

So when you have had a hard day and no one seems to care just remember that what you do today is important to that one child. You may only have them for a short time or you may have them for a year or more, what you do will have a lasting impact on their lives whether you are still part of it or not.

Again I applaud you all for giving of your home and your lives to meet the needs of our children and their need of a temporary or a forever home.

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As an actress, Tonea is perhaps best known for her recurring role in *In The Heat of the Night*. More recently, she earned an NAACP Image Awards nomination for her role in the film adaptation of John Grisham's *A Time to Kill* and The Gold Medal Award for the narration of Public Radio International's series "Remembering Slavery." Tonea began her acting career in 1969 and became the first African American to direct and star on stage at New Stage Theatre, the most prestigious equity theatre in Mississippi. Since then, she has preformed on stage in Canada, Mexico, South Korea, Scotland, and throughout the United States, including Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, and has appeared on screen and television. Some notable titles include: *The Rosa Parks Story*, *Mississippi Burning*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers III*, *Living Large*, *My Stepson/My Lover*, "Walker, Texas Ranger," "Matlock", "Leave of Absence," "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," "ER", and "Touched by an Angel."

Tonea has served as spokesperson for "One Church, One Child" of Alabama and for NOSAP, a Texas based organization aimed at youth development. In 1995, she was inducted into the National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame. She has honorary doctorates from Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa, and Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, Texas, and has received numerous keys to cities throughout the Unites States.

Tonea is a member of the Order of The Golden Circle, a life member of the NAACP, SCLC, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. and a dedicated member of Hutchinson Baptist Church. She is married to Dr. Allen Stewart. They have three children.



CLOSING SESSION SATURDAY MAY 16TH, 2009

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

BELINDA B. JENKINS

Belinda Jenkins, a foster parent of Acworth, Georgia brings to you a world of personal experiences from fostering over 7 seven years and 70+ children. She is a graduate of Jacksonville State University with a degree in Business Administration and a Paralegal degree from Cumberland Law School. She is the proud parent of Dallas-21, Trey-20, Torrie-18, Ciara-16, Tyler-5 and Rachel-4. She and her husband, Danny, have parented children of all age, race, and emotional and behavior issues.

For the past two years Belinda and her husband have fostered a precious little girl whose name is Sicily. Sicily came to be with the Jenkins' family when she was only four days old and has recently been returned to her birth parents after twenty-two months. The Jenkins' family and the Evans-Mercer family have joined together to share in the raising of little Sicily. To avoid confusion, a shared parenting concept has been adopted and the two parents are working together to transition Sicily to her forever home.

CHRISTY EVANS-MERCER

Christy Evans-Mercer, a birth parent of Atlanta, Georgia will share her story as a birth parent whose child was taken at birth due to drug issues. She will share her success in having her child returned to her and her husband, Michael. Christy and her husband are very much in favor of the shared parenting concept and look forward to working with the Jenkins' in the future to share the parenting of their little girl, Sicily.

Josh Kroll Speaker from North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)

Josh will be delivering several workshops during the Annual Conference

Josh is the Project Coordinator of the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center, a program of the North American Council on Adoptable Children. He has worked at NACAC for 11 years, 9 years as a program assistant to the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center. In his 9 years working with the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center he gained an extensive knowledge of federal and state laws and policies that he draws upon to answer thousands of inquiries from parents, workers, and administrators.

In addition to his work with the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center, he has supported NACAC's parent group work. He has also written NACAC's federal adoption tax credit fact sheets.

WORDS OR INSIGHT FROM MAC OTTS

When Buddy kindly asked me to write this article, I thought about what might be most important for me to address - in terms of meeting the needs of vulnerable children or those in care in Alabama. I wanted to address three, but realized they require more time and space than I have here. The two I left out are child death review and ISPs, but the one I'm talking about here has the capacity to address both of those. I humbly commend it to your thinking, discussion, and prayers.

I believe a top priority should be development of an independent advocacy organization in Alabama for child welfare. I once asked a nationally-recognized professional in child welfare to tell me what she thought was most important for us to improve. She said there needs to be an independent advocacy organization that centers on child welfare in Alabama. I had not expected that response because my experience had been that people like her, who know this state and other states, have generally mentioned DHR specifically when talking about such things. Years later, I'm sure she was right. Experience has just reinforced it for me.

A few years ago, some folks representing several organizations, including AACCA and AFAPA, met to discuss this potential. We agreed on the need, and had hopes that our agreement would result in action. Long story short: The effort fell flat for several reasons. I personally did not keep pushing for it beyond a few phone calls and emails. I was affected by things other than the best interests of children. I'm not saying I didn't care. I'm saying that, when push came to shove, I did not follow through. As far as I'm concerned, I had no acceptable excuse.

My opinion is that no organization in Alabama has been independent enough or sufficiently endowed financially, to center advocacy on child welfare without backing off at critical points. Bringing it about requires a lot of time and resources. I am convinced that, without such a development, Alabama remains prime territory for lawsuits. It's just a matter of time because child welfare is very important and very complicated. The children need all the help they can get to make it hit on all cylinders for them, and DHR is only one aspect of that, albeit a vital one.

Though many of us know the need, nobody has yet paid the price to make it happen. I don't know about anyone else, but I can't find any excuses that are good enough - not when it comes to Alabama's most important resource - the children.

Mac Otts, Program Consultant (former Director of AACCA)

MEET DYLAN



Dylan, born November 1993 is a delightful, personal young man who will make a positive impression from the first meeting. He is a very intelligent, insightful and mature young man. Those who speak with him forget that he is only 15-years-old due to his impressive intellect, and his wide array of interests that include learning French, playing piano, and keeping abreast of current events.

Dylan makes good grades and is a model citizen at his current placement. He loves to play on the computer, read, play his keyboard and talk to friends. He frequently chooses these activities over watching TV. His goal is to attend college and work in a field that offers travel opportunities.

Dylan is very spiritual and his hero is Jesus, because He died for him. Dylan is an overcomer, who maintains a positive outlook on life, as well as a healthy self-esteem and confidence level. Dylan wants a family who will love him unconditionally, accept him for who he is and support his academic and career pursuits.

Portrait provided courtesy of
www.heartgalleryalabama.com

GIVE ME A BREAK WORKSHOP

AFAPA and SDHR have been working on a project to help Adoptive Families find needed respite care for their children. As part of that project we will have a special workshop at the annual conference on May 15th which will focus on respite for special needs children. The workshop is "Give Me A Break" which is also what we are calling our project. You can get more information about the organization which will present the workshop by contacting them from the information below. You may also contact AFAPA with questions about the project.

Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network
2505 Inverness Lane
Birmingham, Alabama 35242
1-205-991-0927
1-866-RESTALA
alabamarespite@aol.com
www.alabamarespite.org

1 Corinthians 13 for Moms

I can read bedtime stories till the cow jumps over the moon and sing "Ten Little Monkeys" until I want to call the doctor--but if I don't have love, I'm as annoying as a ringing phone.

I can chase a naked toddler through the house while cooking dinner and listening to voice mail, I can fix the best cookies and Kool-Aid in the neighborhood, and I can tell a sick child's temperature with one touch of my finger, but if I don't have love, I am nothing.

Love is patient while watching and praying by the front window when it's 30 minutes past curfew.

Love is kind when my teen says, "I hate you!"

It does not envy the neighbors' swimming pool or their brand-new mini van, but trusts the Lord to provide every need.

Love does not brag when other parents share their disappointments and insecurities, and love rejoices when other families succeed.

It doesn't boast, even when I've multi-tasked all day long and my husband can't do more than one thing at a time.

Love is not rude when my spouse innocently asks, "What have you done today?"

It does not immediately seek after glory when we see talent in our children, but encourages them to get training and make wise choices.

It is not easily angered, even when my 15-year-old acts like the world revolves around her. It does not delight in evil (is not self-righteous) when I remind my 17-year-old that he's going 83 in a 55-mph zone, but rejoices in the truth.

Love does not give up hope. It always protects our children's self-esteem and spirit, even while doling out discipline.

It always trusts God to protect our children when we cannot. It always perseveres, through blue nail polish, burps and other bodily functions, rolled eyes and crossed arms, messy rooms and sleepovers.

Love never fails. But where there are memories of thousands of diaper changes and painful labor(s), they will fade away.

Where there is talking back, it will (eventually) cease. (Please, Lord?)

Where there is a teenager who thinks she knows everything, there will one day be an adult who knows you did your best.

For we know we fail our children, and we pray they don't end up in therapy, but when we get to heaven, our imperfect parenting will disappear. (Thank you, God!)

When we were children, we needed a parent to love and protect us. Now that we're parents ourselves, we have a heavenly Father who adores, shelters us and holds us when we need to cry.

And now these three remain:
faith, hope and love.
But the greatest of these is love.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ISP'S

The ISP is a plan that is created by a team, which includes, but is not limited to: the age appropriate child, the child's parents, the child's caseworker, and the foster parents (when the child is in out-of-home care). School teachers, therapists and other providers of services to the children and their families are also important to the decision making process and should be invited to the ISP meeting. It is tailored to the circumstances and need of the particular child. It also takes into consideration the needs of our foster parent partners. Actually it is a plan for the delivery of services to children and families served by DHR as well as delivery of services to foster parents who are providing care for the children. The goal is for all decisions to be made in the ISP process. If Foster parents need training on the ISP process they can request it of their local DHR or licensing agency.

What is an individualized service plan?

DHR must develop ISPs for all children and families for whom it is providing on-going child welfare services and foster care.

Individualized:

The ISP builds on the family's strengths and addresses the family's unique needs.

Service:

The ISP identifies specific services that will be provided to the child and their family.

Plan:

The ISP identifies the goals for the family, identifies the steps to be taken, and identifies who is responsible for each step or service.

Who writes an ISP and who attends?

The ISP is written at an ISP team meeting. The ISP team members should be partners in developing the ISP. The ISP team should include the child if age appropriate usually 10 years old or older, the birth family, foster parents, DHR worker. Others who may be included in an ISP meeting are the child's teacher, family pastor, relatives, therapists, attorneys for the child or family, another DHR staff involved with the child or family, and an advocate requested by the foster parent.

What does the ISP contain?

1. The child's physical and mental health, safety, education, and social needs.
2. Additional assessments needed to help identify the strengths and needs and time frames for obtaining those assessments
3. Immediate steps that are going to be taken to meet the child's safety needs.
4. Visitation for child
5. Outcomes or permanency goals for the child and when it's expected these outcomes will be achieved.
6. Steps to promote a timely return home or placement with relatives, if this is the child's permanency goal.

When is the ISP Written?

An ISP must be held within 72 hours of removal from the home followed by an update within the next 30 days.

Where are ISPs held?

Any mutually agreed upon location.

Will I be notified about the ISP meeting?

All team members should be notified of the date, time and location of each ISP meeting to allow time to prepare for and participate in the meeting. Parents, foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative

caregivers must be provided written notice about any ISP meeting. The remaining team members may receive either verbal or written notice.

What if there are problems with the ISP?

The DHR worker is responsible for addressing concerns about how well the ISP is being implemented. Minor issues that can be resolved without the full team involvement may be dealt with informally. Any issues that are controversial or complex should be handled in a team meeting.

Will I receive a copy of the ISP?

You must be given a written copy of the plan at the end of the meeting. If this is not possible, then you should receive a copy at least within 10 days of the date the meeting was held.

When will the ISP be reviewed?

Can you call an ISP?

An initial ISP must be reviewed within 30 days of the date it was developed. After that, the team must review ISP's at least every 6 months from the date of the initial ISP and more frequently as needed. Any team member can call for a meeting to review and revise the ISP. Contact the DHR caseworker if you want to have an ISP meeting. ISP's must be reviewed and revised when any of the following occur:

At your request or at request of other team members
When there are changes in the families circumstances
Prior to the decision to remove a child from home.

After an emergency change in a child's out-of-home placement

When a change in an out-of-home placement is anticipated

When the ISP is not adequately managing risks or new risks are identified

When you or another team member feels that the child or family is making little or no progress toward the established goals

When any judicial or administrative review recommends or direct that changes be made to the ISP

Within 30 days of the case being closed

When Medicaid rehabilitation services have been authorized and a treatment plan review is required.

The DHR caseworker and other team members must make good faith efforts to achieve the goals and objectives of the ISP

The ISP must be realistic and appropriate, with goal and steps that fit the child's present placement and level of functioning.

ISP's work better if everyone involved knows the policy and how ISP meetings are to be conducted.

For the full text on ISP Policy check with your local DHR office or check the www.afapa.org web site or see page 151 in the updated AFAPA Foster Care Journal.

Foster Parent Bill of Rights and the ISP

(12) The right to information of scheduled meetings and appointments concerning the foster child and permission for the foster parent to actively participate in and provide input to be used by the Individualized Service Plan team in the case planning and decision-making process regarding the child in foster care, including, but not limited to, individual service planning meetings, foster care reviews, individual educational planning meetings, and medical appointments.

(13) The right to request that a person or persons serve as volunteer advocate and to be present at all meetings with the department, including, but not limited to, individualized service planning, administrative hearings, the grievance/mediation process, the adoption process, and the allegation process where the foster parent is present. All communications received by the volunteer advocate shall be in strict confidence.

(14) The right to notice and an opportunity to be heard, including timely information concerning all court hearings. This notification may include, but is not limited to, notice of the date and time of the court hearing, the name of the judge or hearing officer assigned to the case, the guardian ad litem, the location of the hearing, and the court docket number. The notification shall be made upon receipt of this information by the department. Although not a party to the case, the foster parent may attend court hearings at the discretion of the judge.

SPECIAL WORKSHOP FOR EARLY ARRIVALS

The Court System Presented by Judge Paul Sherling Thursday May 14th 2:00 PM About Paul Sherling

A 5th generation native of Coffee County, and an Enterprise High graduate in 1988, Paul Sherling attended Enterprise State Junior College on a Fine Arts Scholarship and transferred to Auburn University where he received a BA in 1992.

Paul received his law degree from Mississippi College in 1996 and began his career as an Assistant District Attorney for the 12th Judicial Circuit which covers Coffee and Pike Counties.

In December 1998, Paul left the District Attorney's office and went into private practice, in Lee County with two other partners. In April 2001, Paul and his wife returned to their roots in Coffee County where he opened his own practice.

In January 2003, Paul was appointed Municipal Judge for the City of Enterprise. In January 2005, he took the bench as District Judge for Coffee County. As District Judge, Paul presides over felony preliminary hearings, misdemeanor cases, civil cases up to \$10,000, child support cases, and juvenile dependency and juvenile delinquency cases in Coffee County. He also preside over misdemeanor cases for the Cities of Elba, New Brockton, and Kinston.

Paul's caseload exceeds over 11,000 new cases filed each year with a 95% disposition rate in cases of 12 months or less. His case load is the 7th busiest docket in the state. He serves on the Board of Directors for Coffee County Family Services and on the Alabama State Bar leadership committee. Paul is married to the former Heidi Morgan of Enterprise, a former 2nd Grade teacher and now stay at home mother. They are both active members at 1st United Methodist in Enterprise. They have two children, a daughter Mary Elizabeth, 4 year old, and a son Braxton, 1 1/2.

A Special Thank You to our friends at Heart Gallery for suppling us with photos of the children in need of adoption.



To see more of Alabama's waiting children
(and to hear their voices) please visit
www.heartgalleryalabama.com

FREQUENTLY ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT CONFERENCE

When is the AFAPA business meeting and Elections?

The business meeting will begin Friday, May 15th, 2009, 9:30 AM

When and How to Register: Call now to Shocco Springs 1-800-280-1105 to register or send completed registration form to Shocco.

When does Conference begin: You may arrive Thursday May 14th and enjoy lunch at Shocco 12:00 noon. Pick up Conference bag 1:00 to 4:00.

When and Where is first session:

The first session begins Thursday 2:00 PM in the Chapel. Don't miss the opening session on "The Court System" by Judge Paul Sherling. This is the only time this workshop will be presented.

Friday, May 15th Pick up bags 8:00 – 11:30 and 1:00 – 4:00

When is the Awareness Walk: The Walk Me Home Awareness Walk will be Thursday 4:00 – 5:00 around Shocco Campus. Shirts will be available for purchase.

When is the Scholarship Awards Program: The Awards will be Friday Night May 15th, 2009 7:00 to 9:00 PM in the Chapel with Tonea Stewart speaking. Credit for 2 Training hours for this presentation

When is the conference over: The conference comes to an end Saturday with a closing workshop in the Chapel by Belinda Jenkins President of the North Georgia Foster Parent Association.

The workshop is "Shared Parenting"

Belinda and her husband have been foster parents for over six years in Bartow County, Georgia. They have three birth children, have adopted one little boy and have fostered over 50 children. Out of the 50 children they have fostered nine have been methamphetamine addicted newborns.

Belinda's professional experience includes working in the administrative field for the past twenty years as a Paralegal. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Jacksonville State University and a Paralegal Degree from Cumberland Law School, Birmingham, Alabama. She also has a Nursing Degree from Floyd College. She utilizes her nursing skills to help he children who are addicted to drugs when they are born.

Belinda currently works as a Field Representative/ Membership Specialist for the Girl Scout Council of Northwest Georgia. This is a new career endeavor for her in which she is enjoying greatly. She has the opportunity to change the lives of children through scouting.

CHANGES TO THE AFAPA BY LAWS

**Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association
business meeting will be
Friday May 15th, 2009 9:45 AM
Shocco Springs Chapel**

The following are recommended changes to the AFAPA By Laws: These changes will be voted on at the Annual conference by all members present May 15th, 2009 at Shocco Springs. If a majority of members present vote for the change the changes will become effective immediately

Section 3. Nominations and Elections

The term of office for each officer shall be for a period of two (2) years. ~~(delete) No board member may be elected for more than two (2) consecutive terms in any one (1) position on the board.~~

(A) Elections of the officers of this association will be held at the annual training conference. The terms of the officers-elect will begin on the first day of the next accounting year.

(B) A nominating committee, which shall be appointed by the president will be comprised of five (5) board members. The committee shall present a slate of officers to the voting constituency for consideration and proposed election.

~~(Add) (C) Any member nominated must be present to verify their eligibility and accept their nomination.~~

~~(C) Change to (D)~~ Any elected officer or committee member may be relieved of duties and removed from office because of misconduct of a nature that reflects discredit on her/himself or on the association by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the board of directors present. If for any reason an elected officer cannot complete a term, the board of directors shall appoint a person to complete the term.

All Executive Board positions on the AFAPA board are up for election. The Nominating Committee will nominate a candidate for each office beginning with President. Nominations will be accepted from the floor for each office. Each person nominated will come forward to accept nomination and have 2 minutes to address the membership. Votes will be cast by qualified members standing for the candidate of their choice. Votes will be counted and the person receiving a majority will be declared the winner.

There will also be elections for Regional Representatives from all 9 AFAPA Regions. The regions will meet in a caucus meetings for the purpose of electing a Regional Representative. These meetings will be conducted by current Regional Rep. You must be a foster or adoptive parent living in a Region to be elected from that region regardless of what county you are licensed in.

MEET TY



Ty, born January 1998 is a very bright energetic young man. He enjoys playing video games and loves to play with remote control cars. Ty loves to be the center of attention and seems to flourish with any form of affection. Ty needs help with controlling

his emotions sometimes, but can be easily redirected with positive words of encouragement.

Ty is currently in the 6th grade (2008-09 school year) and is always on the A-B honor roll. He loves to read and has an above average reading level. Ty loves sports, especially basketball and football. Ty attends public school and does well interacting with his peers.

Ty's favorite food is French fries and his favorite place to eat is McDonald's. He always orders the 10- piece Chicken McNugget Meal (Large) with a vanilla shake. Ty is of average intelligence and size. He has a very light complexion with brown eyes and short brown hair. He loves to wear fashionable clothes and pays special attention to his appearance. Ty loves dress up and look nice and loves being told how nice he looks.

Portrait provided courtesy of
www.heartgalleryalabama.com



**Registration Form on page 14
for the AFAPA Conference
May 14th, 15th, and 16th, 2009**

WALK ME HOME TO THE PLACE I BELONG TEE SHIRTS

AFAPA would like to have thousands of people wearing these shirts for May Foster Care Month Celebrations all across the state to bring awareness to the needs of foster children and families.

Deadline for having names put on the back of shirts is April 10th.

\$100 to have name added to back of shirt
\$250 to have a company logo added to back of shirt (requires sending a jpeg file by deadline)

The shirts will then be ordered and will be ready for delivery or pickup by April 25th.

Shirts are \$10 each plus shipping and can be ordered online or by mail to the AFAPA address 1091 County Road 1659 Cullman, Al 35058

There is still room for more so send in your donation or visit the www.afapa.org website to make a donation.

Donations for Sponsorship of the "Walk Me Home To The Place I Belong" Tee Shirts as of the printing of this newsletter. Proceeds from the Walk Me Home Project will help to fund the AFAPA Scholarship fund, and the new Alabama Birthday Wish for Foster Children Project.

Kelly Paris-Barnes Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

Robin Cummings

People's Bank of Alabama

Walker Bros LTD Building Supply Baileyton, Al

Talis Willingham Alfa Agent

ALFA Insurance Holly Pond, Alabama

William Buddy & Martha Hooper

Shirley Merrills

Barbara Lawrence

Sammy Key

Seth Key

Brenda Caudle

Joe Anthony

Gina Nixon

Heritage Turf Midway, Al

James & Grace Wood

Roy & Sue Thomas

Leroy & Mary Smith

Nicholas Gay

Dollie Mims

Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center

Bryan Business Solutions Cullman

Julia Ann Hyde Director Chambers County DHR

Morgan County DHR



THE PRICE OF CHILDREN

This is just too good not to pass on to all. Here is something absolutely positive for a change. I have repeatedly seen the breakdown of the cost of raising a child, but this is the first time I have seen the rewards listed this way. It's nice.

The government recently calculated the cost of raising a child from birth to 18 and came up with \$160,140.00 for a middle-income family. Talk about price shock! That doesn't even touch college tuition.

But \$160,140.00 isn't so bad if you break it down. It translates into:

- \$8,896.66 a year,
- \$741.38 a month,
- \$171.08 a week.
- A mere \$24.24 a day! * Just over a dollar an hour.

Still, you might think the best financial advice is; don't have children if you want to be 'rich.' Actually, it is just the opposite.

What do you get for your \$160,140.00?

- Naming rights. First, middle, and last!
- Glimpses of God every day.
- Giggles under the covers every night.
- More love than your heart can hold.
- Butterfly kisses and Velcro hugs.
- Endless wonder over rocks, ants, clouds, and warm cookies.
- A hand to hold usually covered with jelly or chocolate.
- A partner for blowing bubbles and flying kites.
- Someone to laugh yourself silly with, no matter what the boss said or how your stocks performed that day.

For \$160,140.00, you never have to grow up.

You get to:

- finger-paint,
- carve pumpkins,
- play hide-and-see,
- catch lightning bugs,
- never stop believing in Santa Claus.

You have an excuse to:

- keep reading the Adventures of Piglet and Pooh,
- watch Saturday morning cartoons,
- go to Disney movies, and
- wish on stars.

You get to frame rainbows, hearts, and flowers under refrigerator magnets and collect spray painted noodle wreaths for Christmas, hand prints set in clay for Mother's Day, and cards with backward letters for Father's Day.

For a mere \$24.24 a day, there is no greater bang for your buck. You get to be a hero just for:

- retrieving a Frisbee off the garage roof,
- taking the training wheels off a bike,
- removing a splinter,
- filling a wading pool,
- coaxing a wad of gum out of bangs, and
- coaching a baseball team that never wins but always gets treated to ice cream regardless.

You get a front row seat in history to witness the:

- First step,
- First word,
- First bra,
- First date,
- First time behind the wheel.

You get to be immortal. You get another branch added to your family tree, and if you're lucky, a long list of limbs in your obituary called grandchildren and great grandchildren. You get an education in psychology, nursing, criminal justice, communications, and human sexuality that no college can match.

In the eyes of a child, you rank right up there under God. You have all the power to heal a boo-boo, scare away the monsters under the bed, patch a broken heart, police a slumber party, ground them forever, and love them without limits, so one day they will, like you, love without counting the cost. That is quite a deal for the price!!!!!!!

Love & enjoy your children, grandchildren, neices, nephews, and even other people's children !!!!!!! It's the best investment you'll ever make!!!!!!!!!

MEET KANTREL



Antonio (AJ) born in September 1995 prefers to be called "AJ". He is a sweet and loving young man. He is also very bright and enjoys learning new things. He is currently in the 5th grade where he is an A/B honor roll student.

AJ is a very sensitive child, who has made great efforts to learn the skills necessary to deal with his emotions in a healthy way. He seems to make the most progress in a structured environment that

is based on schedules and routine. He finds comfort in consistency, but is able to adapt to a gradual change.

AJ enjoys video games, basketball, and watching movies. He also enjoys doing arts and crafts where he is able to express his creativity. His favorite arts and crafts projects always involve colored clay.

AJ has expressed the desire to be in a forever home, where he knows that he will always be welcomed and loved. Antonio has siblings that he wishes to remain in contact with.

Portrait provided courtesy of
www.heartgalleryalabama.com

SPEAKER PHYLLIS STEVENS

Phyllis is founder and Executive Director of Together as Adoptive Parents, Inc. (TAP) a non-profit, multi-racial adoptive, foster and kinship parent group in Pennsylvania. Phyllis and her husband Derek have 5 children. One birth son and 4 adopted. She has conducted trainings and presented locally & nationally on topics such as parent leadership, adoption subsidies, post-permanent services, special needs adoption, cultural competency, recruitment and retention, and group development. In addition, Phyllis serves on the board of directors for the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) and on Pennsylvania's Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) advisory board.

Phyllis is a technical assistance consultant for The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids. She is also a technical assistance consultant for the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Adoption. Phyllis has won many awards locally and nationally for her work with children.

MEET KANTREL



Kantrel, born November 1996, is a healthy, energetic, somewhat quiet young man. He loves to be active. He wants to do something fun as much as possible. He enjoys outside activities, biking, swimming, baseball, football, etc. Kantrel has a good appetite. He enjoys lots of food, but if given the chance he would eat pizza all day long. His favorite snacks lean toward junk food, particularly potato chips.

Like most boys his age Kantrel likes playing video games and watching action movies. Kantrel is possessive and he is particular about his things. He will share toys when asked and he gets along well with others. Kantrel loves getting presents.

School is not his favorite thing. He does try and can do well when he fully understands things. He needs help remembering to ask questions when he does not understand something.

When it comes to meeting new people, Kantrel starts of shy. He will open up once he knows someone. he is not shy about voicing his choices when it comes to restaurants, movies or activities with a group.

Kantrel has adapted well to the changes that he has faced during his life. He is easy-going most of the time. he's faced many challenges and come through them all well.

Portrait provided courtesy of
www.heartgalleryalabama.com

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN ADOPTION THROUGH STATE DHR?

County DHR offices may approve families to adopt, only if the family is going to adopt a foster child placed in their home by their county department.

If you have applied to be an adoptive parent and have completed GPS and the home study process, the Office of Adoption can verify that you have an adoption home study on file with the State DHR office. Having a study on file with our office is the only way that you are considered as a possible resource for any/all of Alabama's waiting children. If you want to verify your approval status, you can e-mail Families4ALKids@dhr.state.al.us. Give us your name and birth date (for both parents if a two-parent household) and your county of residence and the name of your county resource worker. If you don't have access to e-mail (preferred method of contact) you may call and leave this information on the Recruitment hotline at 1-866-425-5437 (1-866-4AL-KIDS).

LIST OF SOME OF THE WORKSHOPS PLANNED FOR THE AFAPA CONFERENCE

- Parenting the Sexually Abused Child
- Trauma and the Children
- One Parental Involvement
- Aging Out of Foster Care "What's Next"
- Give Me A Break (Respite Program)
- Special Need Adoption: Adoption Subsidies and Other Post Adoption Services
- The Parent Project
- What Can Professional Counselors Do For Us?
- Advocating for Children in Foster Care and Their Foster Parents
- Understanding Special Education
- Parenting Your out of Control Teenager
- Button Pushing Tactics and Button Bursting Techniques
- Executive Officers and Regional Representative Briefing
- The Court System
- The Trauma Experience
- Love and Logic Parenting
- Grief, Loss, Attachment
- Child Abuse
- Stress Management
- ISP's
- The Court System and You
- Suicide Among Teenagers
- Adoption, Foster Care, and School
- Behavior Therapy
- Diversity of Hair Care
- Town Hall Meeting
- ADHD
- Shared Parenting



SCENES FROM THE AFAPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, MAY 2008



A GIFT FROM THE HEART

ABOUT REGISTRATION

Because there is no reimbursement for mileage this year to attend the conference AFAPA has waived the registration fee, room and meal cost for Foster Parents, Adoptive Parents, Workshop Presenters, and DHR workers.

(All others contact Shocco for room and meal cost.)

Everyone must call Shocco Springs to register (1-800-280-1105 or 256-761-1100.)

Room rates are for double occupancy so please make arrangements to share rooms.

Private rooms are \$20 extra and are the responsibility of participants. Credit Cards will be accepted.

Registration Form for AFAPA Conference May 14th, 15th, and 16th, 2009

Please submit one form for each person registering you may make copies (not required if you call Shocco and register)

Please circle all that apply

DHR Foster Parent, Adoptive Parent, Social Worker,

Therapeutic Foster Parent, Agency _____

Please Print:

Participants Name : _____

County _____

Street/P.O. Box _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

e-mail address _____

Telephone number(s):

Daytime (_____) _____

Evening (_____) _____

Check one:

- 1 night/4 meals (Friday lunch and dinner Saturday breakfast and lunch)
- 2 nights/7 meals (Thursday lunch and dinner, Friday breakfast, lunch, and dinner, Saturday breakfast and lunch)
- Commuters with no overnight circle meals
(Thursday lunch and dinner, Friday breakfast, lunch, and dinner, Saturday breakfast and lunch)

Deadline for Pre-Registration is May 1st, 2009

Make checks payable to Shocco Springs

Mail checks & completed registration to:

Shocco Springs AFAPA Conference

P.O. Box 886

Talladega, Al 35161

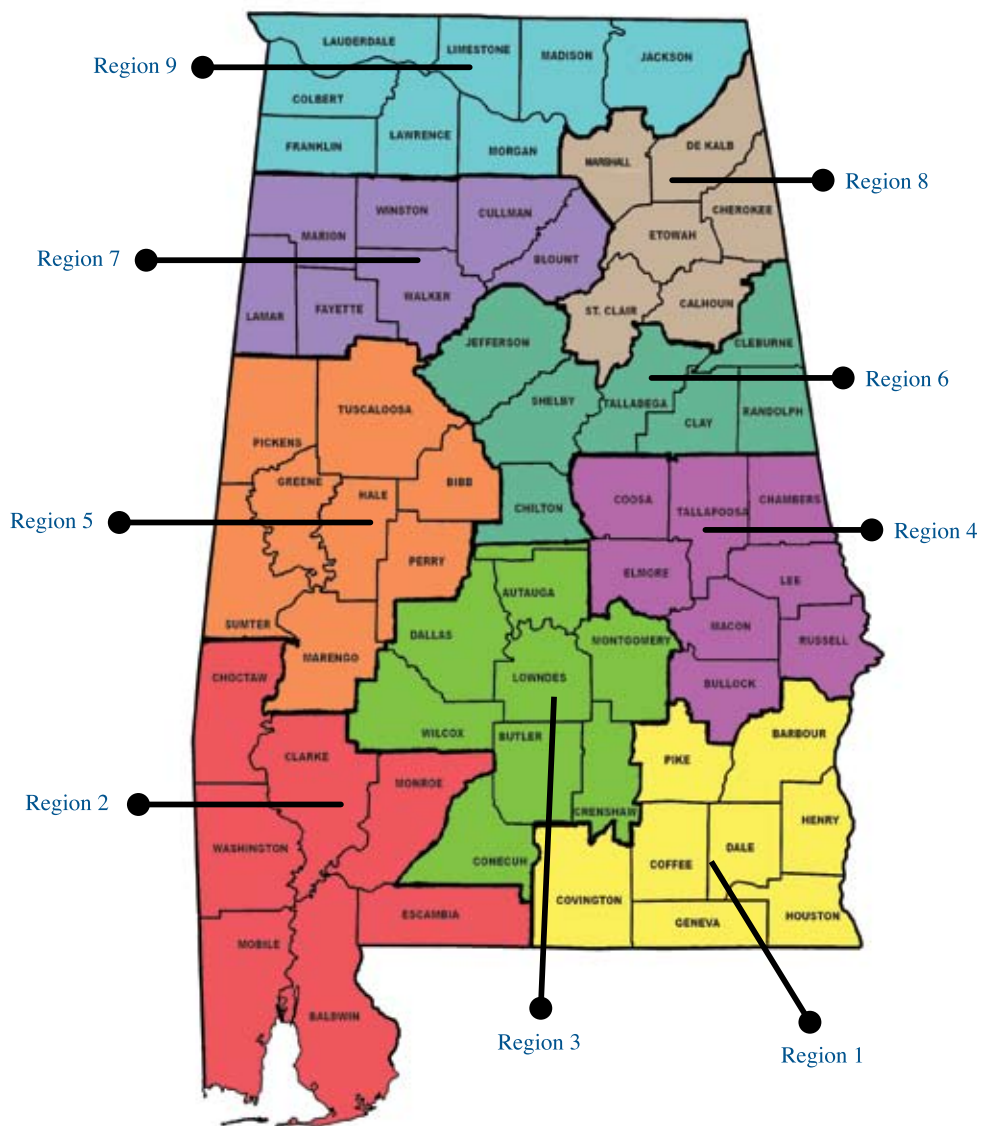
Fax 256-761-1270



Everyone who comes to the Shocco Springs Conference Center must be a registered guest.

Anyone other than foster parents, adoptive parents, or DHR social workers must call Shocco for cost of meals, and overnight stay.

AFAPA REGIONS



Who's Your Regional Rep?

REGION 1

Joe Anthony
334-886-2734 • 334-718-02440
jandcanthony@centurytel.net

REGION 2

Dollie Mims
251-604-3522 • 251-937-2336
DollBAym@aol.com

REGION 3

Shirley Merrill
251-578-9964 • 251-227-1808
region3@afapa.org

REGION 4

Mary Smith
334-567-4143 • 334-303-1426
star1000@aol.com

REGION 5

Ida Ellis
205-372-0247 • 205-372-7233
region5@afapa.org

REGION 6

Grace Wood
256-488-5567 • 256-276-4377
Graceafapavp@aol.com

REGION 7

Sue Thomas
205-698-9936 • 205-712-6101
suthomas@bamacomm.com

REGION 8

Martha Hooper
256-796-0582 • 256-507-3274
frogmh@aol.com

REGION 9

Doris Wise
256-757-0308 • 256-810-0359
doriswise@peoplepc.com

Why contact your Regional Representative

- For latest info on where and when Education & Training Meetings will be held
- For assistance on who to call for guidance on specific problems/ issues you are facing
- To invite to your county association meetings to help with training and information.
- To learn more about training opportunities through out the state.



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1091 County Road 1659
Cullman, AL 35058
1-888-545-2372
www.afapa.org

CONNECTIONS INFO:

Articles can be submitted to Buddy Hooper, Editor. E-mail submissions should be addressed to afapa@afapa.org. Otherwise, mail to AFAPA 1091 County Road 1659 Cullman, AL 35058. Deadline dates fall the first of the month in February, May, August, & November.

PARENT - JOB DESCRIPTION

This is hysterical. If it had been presented this way, I don't believe any of us would have done it!!!!

POSITION:

- Mom, Mommy, Mama, Ma • Dad, Daddy, Dada, Pa, Pop

JOB DESCRIPTION:

- Long term, team players needed, for challenging, permanent work in an often chaotic environment.
- Candidates must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work variable hours, which will include evenings and weekends and frequent 24 hour shifts on call.
- Some overnight travel required, including trips to primitive camping sites on rainy weekends and endless sports tournaments in far away cities!
- Travel expenses not reimbursed.
- Extensive courier duties also required.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The rest of your life.

- Must be willing to be hated, at least temporarily, until someone needs \$5.
- Must be willing to bite tongue repeatedly.
- Also, must possess the physical stamina of a pack mule and be able to go from zero to 60 mph in three seconds flat in case, this time, the screams from the backyard are not someone just crying wolf.
- Must be willing to face stimulating technical challenges, such as small gadget repair, mysteriously sluggish toilets and stuck zippers.
- Must screen phone calls, maintain calendars and coordinate production of multiple homework projects.
- Must have ability to plan and organize social gatherings for clients of all ages and mental outlooks.
- Must be a willing to be indispensable one minute, an embarrassment the next.
- Must handle assembly and product safety testing of a half million cheap, plastic toys, and battery operated devices.

- Must always hope for the best but be prepared for the worst.
- Must assume final, complete accountability for the quality of the end product.
- Responsibilities also include floor maintenance and janitorial work throughout the facility.

POSSIBILITY FOR ADVANCEMENT & PROMOTION :

- None.
- Your job is to remain in the same position for years, without complaining, constantly retraining and updating your skills, so that those in your charge can ultimately surpass you

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE:

- None required unfortunately.
- On-the-job training offered on a continually exhausting basis.

WAGES AND COMPENSATION:

- Get this! You pay them!
- Offering frequent raises and bonuses.
- A balloon payment is due when they turn 18 because of the assumption that college will help them become financially independent.
- When you die, you give them whatever is left.
- The oddest thing about this reverse-salary scheme is that you actually enjoy it and wish you could only do more.

BENEFITS:

- While no health or dental insurance, no pension, no tuition reimbursement, no paid holidays and no stock options are offered; this job supplies limitless opportunities for personal growth, unconditional love, and free hugs and kisses for life if you play your cards right.

Pass this on to all the PARENTS you know, in appreciation for everything they do on a daily basis, letting them know they are appreciated for the fabulous job they do... or forward with love to anyone thinking of applying for the job.

**** AND A FOOTNOTE 'THERE IS NO RETIREMENT -- EVER!!!**