



Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2011

A Publication of the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

A Journey to Permanency

INDEPENDANT
LIVING

ADOPTION

FOSTER CARE

KINSHIP
CARE

REUNIFICATION

May 12 - 14

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A Message from the President of **AFAPA**

Lots of news for foster & adoptive parents in this issue, make sure you look through and read it all. There will be two large conferences in Alabama this year. First the AFAPA Annual conference at Shocco Springs May 12th – 14th, 2011. The only cost for Foster, Adoptive, Kinship care parents and DHR workers is a \$35 registration fee per person and a \$20 per night fee if you request a private room. Everything else including 2 nights (Thursday & Friday nights) and all the meals served at Shocco are covered. You will also receive lots of goodies including conference bag and tee shirt. There will be another conference newsletter in the next few months giving more detailed information about the conference and workshops.

AFAPA will be the host for the National Foster Parent Conference in Mobile, Al. This will be June 25th-27th which is over a weekend. Foster/Adoptive and Kinship Parents who are members of NFPA in Alabama or join NFPA the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association will pay for your registration to the National. You can join by going to the NFPA website which is nfpaonline.com

and nfpaonline.org. The membership is \$35 per year for each family. You will have to pay \$50 to register per person which AFAPA will refund when you arrive at the Mobile conference. This is necessary to cover the cost of cancelation if for some reason you can't come after registering. The regular registration is \$185 per person and this is what you will have to pay if you do not register through AFAPA. You must register through me in order to get this special I will be emailing all NFPA members in Alabama to keep you updated on information about the conference. In the mean time you can email me at buddy@afapa.org just to let me know you are interested.

The mini conferences in Huntsville, Mobile, and Gardendale were very successful as we had over 200 to attend these. There will be more of this type meeting again in the Fall of 2011. AFAPA is still available if you would like someone to come to your county to do training just contact us by email or phone.

Buddy Hooper,
President

AFAPA ELECTIONS 2011

This is Election Year for AFAPA officers. Chair of the Nomination Committee is Sharlene Castell. If you would like to be considered for election contact Sharlene and she will present your name to the Nomination Committee. The Nomination Committee will present a slate of officers to the Membership at the Annual conference. Nominations will also be taken from the floor. The person being nominated must be present to accept the nomination. You can contact Sharlene by email at sharlene030@aol.com or mail to Sharlene Casteel, 30 McLendon Road, Fort Mitchell, AL 36856.

AFAPA \$1000 STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

AFAPA is proud to announce scholarships available this year to be given out at the AFAPA Annual Conference

Frequently asked questions about AFAPA Student Scholarships

Who's eligible?

All graduating seniors & college-age (22 years old or less) children in care as well as birth and adopted children of foster parents are eligible to apply for an AFAPA scholarship.

Could the scholarship be used for trade school?

Most definitely!

Can the funds be used for books?

Yes, the scholarship funds can be used for tuition, books, lab fees, or supplies purchased thorough the school account.

When should I apply?

The deadline for applications is March 1st, 2011. **Extended to April 1st, 2011 this year.**

Do my grades matter?

AFAPA scholarships are not based on academic achievement. Rather, our review committee will be looking at each individual's needs and goals.

What if I decide not to attend school this year after I am granted the scholarship?

You would not be able to use the scholarship, you would be able to apply for another scholarship when you did start back to school if you are under age 22.

Where can I get an application?

Call the AFAPA office to have one mailed to you 1-888-545-2372. The applications can be downloaded from the www.afapa.org web site.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT AFAPA SCHOLARSHIPS

If chosen to receive scholarship, provide proof of acceptance into a college/university/trade or vocational school is required.

Submit application with (3) three letters of recommendation. Letters can be from foster parents, case workers, teachers, principals, guidance counselors, employers, pastors ect.

A letter giving permission to publish name and photo if chosen for scholarship **must** be submitted with application. For foster children permission must be gotten from social worker and DHR. If unable to get permission please send letter of explanation.

On a separate sheet of paper and in your own handwriting, make a brief statement of why you are applying for this scholarship. Include your hopes for the future and what you expect to contribute to society.

Be no older than 22 years of age.

Unused portion or appropriate percentage of funds must be returned if recipient withdraws or does not report to school as scheduled. Applies also if student does not maintain grade point average required by institution to remain in school.

Scholarships funds are paid directly to the college/university or vocational school and are deposited into students account. Funds are not paid directly to student and may not be used for personal items.

Scholarship funds may be used for tuition, maintenance fees, books, and or school supplies.

Applications which do not have all required information and or permissions will not be considered.

UPDATED INFORMATION ON ADOPTION TAX CREDIT

Not only will the adoption tax credit be extended until December 2011, but it has also been increased from \$12,170 to \$13,170 for adoptions occurring after January 2010. And for the first time, the credit will now be refundable.

What this mean to adoptive families:

This new tax law means that adoptive parents may apply up to \$13,170 of their adoption expenses **toward their taxes owed**, thereby decreasing the amount owed overall by this amount. However, the news gets even better. For the first time, families may be getting **cash back** from the IRS for their adoption expenses. That's right, the credit may now be taken as a refund for the first time. In the event that the Adoptive parents owes less than the tax credit amount stated, they may receive some or all of the balance as a refund on their Federal taxes.

Families who adopt a child with special needs from foster care can claim a federal adoption tax credit without needing to incur or document expenses.

Most families that adopted foster children who receive adoption assistance between 2005 and 2009, and a few who adopted earlier, should be able to take advantage of the federal adoption tax credit, even if they had no expenses related to the adoption. A new law and guidance have now made the tax credit refundable for the first time.

Until tax year 2010, the credit was not refundable, so many families with lower or moderate incomes (and thus low federal tax liability) could not take advantage of the credit. Starting in 2010, the credit is refundable, which means it will benefit many more families—even those who adopted earlier but didn't have enough tax liability to access the credit in previous years.

The full text of the amended language begins on [page 903 of the Health Care Reform Bill \(PDF\)](#).

In addition to the National Foster Parent Association web site www.nfpaonline.org, the North American Council on Adoptable Children web site is a good source of information on this subject. www.nacac.org

Always check with a tax professional for updated information and to make sure you do qualify. This is for information purpose only and not intended as tax advice.

An important provision of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 Law passed at end of 2010 makes foster children categorically eligible for free school meals

(Public Law 111-296), enacted on 12/13/10.

The Act, in Section 102, amends a key provision of the National School Lunch Act (42 USC 1758) to make any foster child categorically eligible, without the necessity of an application, for free school meals if their "care and placement is the responsibility (of an agency that administers a state IV-B or IV-E plan)" or if a "court has placed (the child) with a caretaker household".

In a 1/31/11 guidance letter issued to child nutrition program directors across the country by Cynthia Long, director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (DOA) child nutrition division, she indicated that all a local educational agency need receive is documentation from an appropriate state or local child welfare agency indicating that a child is a foster child under state responsibility or has been placed in a caretaker household by a court. These provisions, according to her letter, are effective as of 10/1/10.

As I read the new provisions of the law, in addition to all foster children placed by a child welfare agency being eligible (regardless of whether they are IV-E qualified), a child placed by a court into a kinship home or other "caretaker" household would also be eligible.

Ms. Long urges school systems to implement this as soon as possible, and not to wait until the next school year. DOA will be providing "prototype applications" for foster/kinship children, and supporting materials, to all state child nutrition programs in the near future, and they are working with HHS to notify state child welfare agencies of this legal development. Ms. Long's letter also urges the nutrition directors to reach out to their child welfare agencies to develop or strengthen communications that will help facilitate local implementation.

FREE LUNCHES CONTINUED

Thanks to the First Lady (who powerfully advocated for Congress to pass this law before it adjourned), we have a new area of support - free nutritional food access at school for foster and kinship care children - that should now be the focus of attention of children's attorneys, guardians ad litem, court appointed special advocates, and judges. At court hearings, the issue of whether children are actually accessing these free meals should be raised. A result should be an important step towards improving the well-being of abused and neglected children.

My colleagues here at the Center will stay on top of the implementation of this new law.

Howard Davidson
 Director & Acting Director,
 Commission on Youth at Risk
 ABA Center on Children and the Law
 American Bar Association
 740 15th St., NW
 Washington, DC 20005
 Phone: 202/662-1740 Fax: 662-1755
www.abanet.org/chil

MEET CHANCE

Chance, born in May 2005 is so very precious. He was born with Microcephaly among many other health issues and was not expected to live past infancy.



These issues will prevent him from living a typical life; he will need lifelong supports. Chance is full of joy even though he lives his life differently than his same-age peers. He loves to sit in front of the television and watch racing even though his vision is very poor. He loves flashing lights and loves the sound of the race cars. He loves to sit in the floor and play with his toys and loves attention. Because of problems with chewing, he eats baby food, or has his food pureed. Chance lacks typical expressive communication skills and a wheelchair is used for mobility. He is currently included in a regular pre-K class and his classmates love him to death.

Photograph provided courtesy of www.heartgalleryalabama.com



This is the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association Trailer which is used to collect donations and carry supplies to and from AFAPA Training sessions.

Thank you to all who donated to this project.

MEET SHADRACH, SHEDRICK (JR.) AND SHEDRICKA (DIAMOND)

Shadrach, Shedrick (Jr.) and Shedricka (Diamond) are a sibling group who are strongly attached to one another. They have been in foster care for since May 2008. They are currently in a therapeutic foster home.



Shedrick, prefers to be called Junior, is the oldest, born in December 1998. His brother and sister look up to him and consider him to be their hero. They often emulate his behaviors and he is protective of them. Jr. makes good grades and he enjoys learning. He likes to read but his passion is football. He loves to play football and if possible, he would do it everyday. Shedrick has a stutter that worsens when he becomes upset or tries to hurry to fast in his speech. Medication helps him focus (he has ADHD).

Shedricka, who prefers to be called Diamond, is the middle child. Born in May 2002, she has big, expressive eyes and a beautiful smile. She is a loving child. Her favorite pastime is art. She enjoys art projects of all types but especially drawing. She also likes to play soccer. Her grades are good. In fact, her last report card reflects all A's and B's. One of her A's was in conduct.

Shadrach, born in October 2005 began attending Head Start during the 2010-2011 school year. He is curious about the world around him and is full of questions. He is a trusting and loving child. He has a smile that lights his whole face up and energy that never wanes. In addition to asking questions, Shadrach enjoys playing and having someone read to him.

This sibling group would benefit from a two-parent home with parents who would encourage and support the children's participation in sports and other activities.

*Photograph provided courtesy of
www.heartgalleryalabama.com*

HORIZON AWARD WINNER TO SPEAK AT AFAPA SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS PROGRAM

Sean Hudson will be the
Speaker at the AFAPA
Scholarship Awards Program
Friday May 13th
at Shocco Springs.

Sean Hudson, a sophomore majoring in social work and psychology at UA, will receive the Realizing the Dream 2011 Horizon Award, which is presented to a youth or young adult in the community for demonstrating outstanding vision and hope that promotes social justice, equality and peace. Hudson grew up in Bessemer in the foster care system. His mission is to become a family court judge and show the world that children in foster care have no limits to what they can accomplish. During his freshman year, Hudson was elected president of the Dedicated Responsible Empowered and Motivated Council, vice president of Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, assistant director of Up Till Dawn, clerk for the Student Judiciary Board and undergraduate research apprentice for the UA School of Social Work. Hudson also participated in the UA Honors College Emerging Scholars Program. As president of the DREAM Council, Hudson travels statewide telling young people his story and encouraging them to make the best of their situations. Hudson was the only foster student from Alabama named a 2010 Outstanding Young Leader.

FIND YOUR PASSION: STUDENT BEATS THE FOSTER-CARE ODDS

By Deirdra Drinkard

University of Alabama student Sean Hudson could have been a statistic – instead he's a success story.

The sophomore from Bessemer grew up under the foster care system, and he says he has made it his mission to show the world what can be achieved by those from foster care backgrounds.

"I think as foster or adoptive children, we place limits on ourselves because of the situations we are in. My goal is to destroy that particular mentality by erasing any doubts about our abilities," he says.

Thanks to help from the Terry and Nick Saban First in Family Scholarship, the Hill Crest Foundation, and the Orphan Foundation of America, Hudson says he is able to focus on his goal of becoming a first-generation college graduate.

A social work and psychology major, Hudson has a plan. He says he wants to earn his master's degree in social work and then apply to UA's Law School so he can one day be a family court judge.

"By becoming a family court circuit judge, I will be able to help mold youth into productive citizens," Hudson says.

In his brief time on campus, Hudson has already made an impact. During his freshman year, he was elected president of the Dedicated Responsible Empowered and Motivated

Council, vice president of Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, assistant director of Up Till Dawn, clerk for the Student Judiciary Board, and undergraduate research apprentice for the UA School of Social Work.

"My freshman year was amazing," says Hudson. "I got a 3.8 GPA in school."

Hudson travels regularly, telling young people his story and offering encouragement.

(Bryan Hester)

Hudson was able to take part in the UA Honors College Emerging Scholars Program, designed to engage freshmen in research initiatives by partnering participants with faculty members.

"I was fortunate enough to work with Dr. Debra Nelson-Gardell in the School of Social Work," Hudson says. The project focused on a program evaluation of some 170 nonprofit organizations that deal with child welfare issues.

"My part in this project was data collection and researching information regarding program evaluations," he says.

Nelson-Gardell says she found Hudson to be someone who 'practices what he preaches.'

"Sean's strong belief in social justice, combined with the strengths he has gained from

surviving the challenges life has thrown at him, gives him a powerful motivation to make his life worthwhile," Nelson-Gardell says.

As president of the DREAM Council, Hudson travels statewide, holding conferences each month and telling young people his story and encouraging them to try to make the best of their situations.

Hudson was recently recognized as the only foster student from Alabama named a 2010 Outstanding Young Leader. As part of the award, Hudson recently traveled to Washington, D.C., and attended the Daniel Memorial Institute "Growing Pains" National Independent Living Conference.

Prior to his departure, Hudson said the conference would provide new and innovative ways to help him teach foster youth independent living skills.

"I want to raise expectations of foster youth," he says.

Sean will also speak at the National Foster Parent Conference in Mobile, Al June 27th at the closing session.

Walk Me Home To The Place I Belong



THE ALABAMA FOSTER & ADOPTIVE
PARENT ASSOCIATION

would like to have thousands of people wearing these shirts all across the state to bring awareness to the needs of foster children and families and the need for permanent homes for children waiting for adoption.

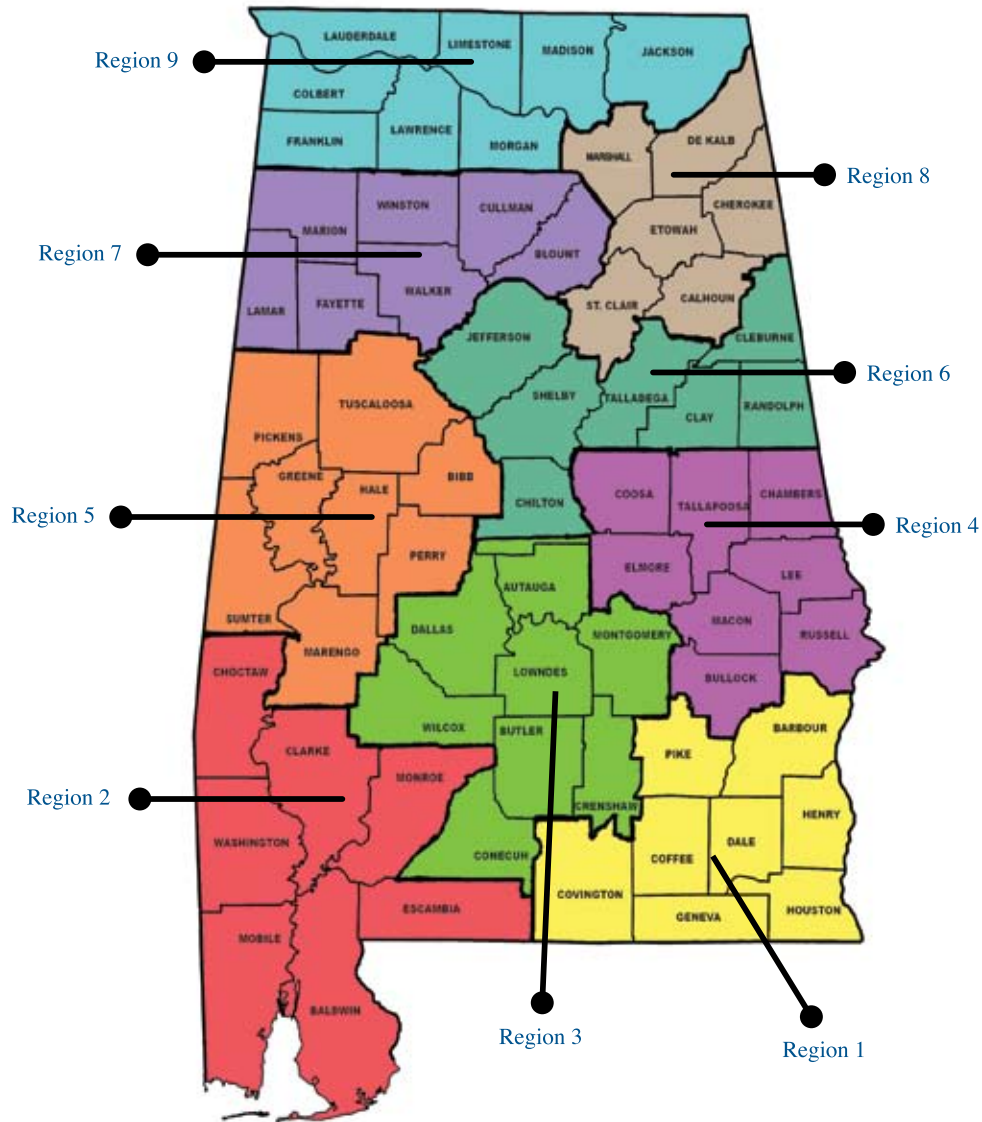


Shirts are \$10 each with free shipping and can be ordered online or by mail to the AFAPA address
1091 County Road 1659 Cullman, Al 35058
Make checks payable to AFAPA
Credit cards are accepted online through paypal
Sizes Adult M- 5x. Some sizes limited

**Proceeds from the Walk Me Home Project
will help to fund the AFAPA Scholarship fund
1-888-545-2372
www.afapa.org**

**Look for a Walk Me Home in your area and if you would
like to sponsor a walk let us know
Visit nfpaonline.org or call 1-888-WalkMeHome
(888-925-5634) for more information.**

AFAPA REGIONS



Who's Your Regional Rep?

REGION 1

Deloris Seay
334-983-3264 • 334-797-0624
dseay2@sw.rr.com

REGION 2

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REGION 9

Martha Hooper
256-507-3274
email frogmh@aol.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.

NACAC PARTNERS WITH H&R BLOCK

NACAC Partners with H&R Block on the Adoption Tax Credit

NACAC has partnered with H&R Block (<http://www.hrblock.com/>) to help adoptive parents determine whether they are eligible to receive additional benefits. H&R Block is offering:

1. Free Second Look Review — An H&R Block tax professional will conduct a thorough review of your prior years, checking to see if any credits or deductions were missed. You'll receive advice on what to do if you qualify for additional benefits.
2. Special pricing on filing amended returns (price will vary by office)
3. \$20 discount on 2010 tax return preparation

Please visit <http://www.nacac.org> to download the H&R Block coupon.

We need your help to share information about the tax credit and the partnership with H&R Block. You can download a flyer about the credit and the H&R Block coupon at <http://www.nacac.org/taxcredit/taxcreditflyer.pdf>. Please distribute the flyer as widely as possible since many adoptive families are still unaware of the credit. If you do distribute the flyer to a group, please e-mail maryboo@nacac.org to let us know how many copies you distributed and to whom (so we can be ready if the distribution generates new calls).

Since 2003, families who adopted a child with special needs from foster care could claim a federal adoption tax credit even if they had no adoption expenses. Other adoptive families are also eligible for the credit, but must document qualified adoption expenses.

The tax credit became refundable for 2010 and 2011. A refundable tax credit is one you back regardless of what you owe or paid in taxes for the year.

Families who adopted from 2005 to 2009 may be able to benefit from the refundable credit because credits from those years can be carried forward until 2010. (Families who adopted in 2003 and 2004 may be able to take some limited advantage of the credit but will not benefit from refundability. Families who adopted earlier will not benefit from the credit if they did not take it already.)

MEET DANISHA

Danisha, born in June 1995, has shoulder-length black hair and brown eyes. She wears glasses and is of average height and weight. She is in the 10th grade (2010-2011 school year) and she is currently taking honors classes. She has played volleyball and basketball at school in the past; however, she is not currently playing any sports. Danisha has also participated in JROTC in the past.



Danisha attends church with her current foster family and this is something she enjoys. She is active in the church youth group. She also sings in the church choir. Danisha has a beautiful voice, although she becomes shy when people tell her this. Danisha also enjoys shopping and spending time with her foster family and friends.

Danisha works well with children. Danisha is very patient and kind toward children and will color, draw, play outside or whatever else they want to do.

Danisha is a very talented artist. She can draw and paint pretty much anything she wants. Danisha has a relationship with her two sisters and enjoys spending time with them. If adopted, Danisha wishes to maintain contact with her sisters as well as her current foster mother.

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



National Foster Parent Conference Registration Information

June 25th – 27th, 2011, Mobile, ALABAMA

Registration Form For Alabama Foster/Adoptive and Kinship Parents, AFAPA Members Only

Others may register at the National Foster Parent website nfpaonline.com

If you are a member of NFPA you can now log onto nfpaonline.com and register your email address then click on forgot password and a password will be sent to you so you can access your profile on the NFPA web site.

The Awards Breakfast Buffet, one Luncheon and a Continental Breakfast are included in the registration fee.

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (____) _____ E-mail _____

Is this the first time you are attending a NFPA Conference? Yes No

AFAPA will pay the \$185 registration FEE

Individual NFPA member \$185 \$50 deposit per person \$ _____

NFPA membership application \$35 per family for 1 year

If not already a member of NFPA. If a member already Give membership number if known _____ \$ _____

I will be attending:

Saturday first time attendees meeting

Saturday PM Meet and Greet Reception

Saturday Luncheon

Sunday Awards Breakfast Buffet

Monday Continental Breakfast

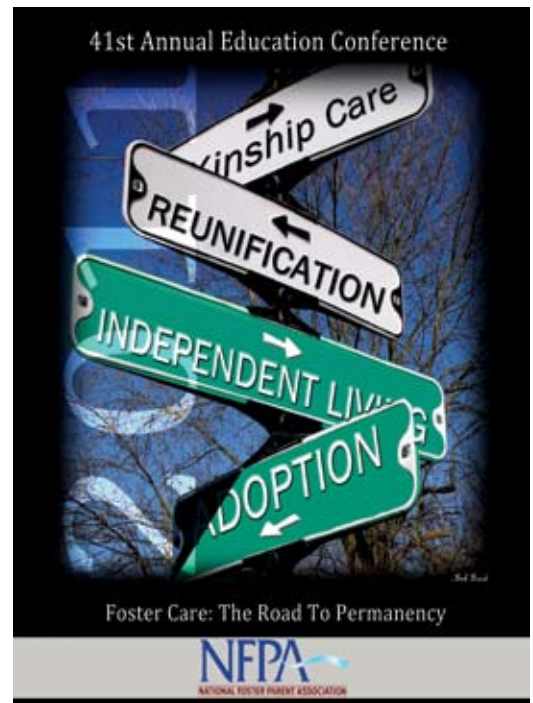
Additional tickets needed:

Luncheon @ \$30 # _____ \$ _____

Breakfast Buffet @ \$25 # _____ \$ _____

Continental Breakfast @ \$15 # _____ \$ _____

Total amount due: \$ _____



Send Check or Money order to AFAPA 1091 Co. Rd. 1659, Cullman, AL, 35058

Registration must be received by April 15th, 2011 to qualify for free registration.

You can also pay online at afapa.org with credit card through paypal. You don't have to have a paypal account to use this form of payment. Your \$50 deposit will be returned to you at the NFPA conference by AFAPA.

HOTEL AND TRAVEL INFORMATION

Hotel: Renaissance Riverview Plaza, 64 South Water Street, Mobile, Alabama

Room Rate: \$99 single or double. Check-in time is 3pm. Check-out time is 12pm.

Reservations: <http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/mobrv?groupCode=nfnpfpa&app=resvlink&fromDate=6/22/11&toDate=6/28/11>

Call 1-251-438-4000 tell them you are with the National Foster Parent Association

Enter the Group Code and click the red Find Button. Then click the \$99 rate and put in information.

Amenities: • complimentary wireless high speed internet access in all guest rooms • Sun deck with pool, Jacuzzi and sauna • coffee service in guest rooms • guest rooms with rail and tub aids available • public areas have ramps where appropriate and Braille elevator panels

Hotel Parking: Self parking - \$12. Valet parking - \$17. Both have in/out privileges



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www.afapa.org

AFAPA NEWSLETTER 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.

ALABAMA FOSTER & ADOPTIVE PARENT ANNUAL CONFERENCE **SHOCCO SPRINGS, ALABAMA** **May 12th – 14th**

To register for conference call Shocco Springs 1-800-280-1105.

- Registration includes all conference material, bag, tee shirt, handouts, ect.
- Thursday and Friday night rooms are included and all meals served by Shocco beginning with Lunch on Thursday through Lunch on Saturday. Because of rising costs and no shows the last 2 years we have had to reinstate the \$35 registration fee for everyone. The only other cost is if you request a private room alone, that cost is \$20 per night.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

- Conference begins with registration 8:00AM on Thursday May 12th with early Bird workshops beginning at 9:00AM. We are working on a CPR and Water Safety Class for Thursday morning also, information on how to register for this class will be in next newsletter.
- Workshops will continue through Saturday with closing session at 2:00PM on Saturday May 14th.
- AFAPA holds elections every 2 years and this is election year for all officers. The AFAPA business meeting will be on Friday morning May 13th, 2011 in the Chapel.
- In addition to all our wonderful in State speakers including those from AFAPA, SDHR, and APAC we have 7 National Speakers lined up to attend. Those returning from last year will be Josh Kroll and Kari Fletcher from NACAC, Phyllis Stevens from Pennsylvania, and Barbara Ford from Maine.
- Thursday night will be networking and entertainment night in the Chapel.
- Friday night will be Scholarship Awards presentation in the Chapel.