



Newsletter

July 2012

A Publication of the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association



GREATER BIRMINGHAM WALK ME HOME EVENT

Sponsored by Shelby County Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Held May 12th, 2012

Great Success!!!

Plans under way for 2nd Annual Walk to be held in May 2013





A Message from the President of AFAPA

Hope everyone is having a great Summer. This has been a very busy time for the AFAPA board planning training and other events to help recruit more foster and adoptive parents. AFAPA board members have also been attending GPS panel nights and local Foster parent meetings when invited. Just give us a call if you have meetings you would like for us to attend.

The AFAPA conference at Shocco Springs was another great conference with around 300 attending. There were great speakers on some very much needed subjects. The food was great as usual and the weather was great this year. This allowed more folks to network outside between classes. AFAPA will be planning mini conferences this Fall and we will announce the place and dates in the next newsletter which will be coming your way in September.

Walk Me Home....to the place I belong. Alabama is having 4 walks this year. We can always help schedule more so if you county association would like to schedule a walk just let me know. Congratulations to Shelby County for a great first walk.

The AFAPA Advocacy program has been helping lots of foster families over the last few months. Our advocates have been called to assist in lots of different ways. Most of them have been called to attend ISP meetings with foster parents. There have been several Conflicts written by foster parents and most have been settled at the local level. If you need assistance don't hesitate to call for help. It is better to nip it in the bud and not let things get worse.

AFAPA is looking for volunteers. We need a people who would love to help with the newsletter, facebook page, and the AFAPA web site. The right person might be asked to Chair the AFAPA Communications Committee others would be on the committee. Please contact me if you are interested in helping in anyway.

For all of you on facebook or who have friends on facebook. AFAPA has a chance to win thousands of dollars for the Scholarship Fund. Go the the Alabama Foster Parent Facebook page and vote for us on the Peoples Bank of Alabama Giving back contest. Contest ends August 8th and you can vote for us everyday until then if we make the top 3. So Vote for the Kids.

Buddy Hooper

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ALABAMA WALK ME HOME EVENT

Walk Me Home....to the place I belong

Walk Me Home is a National Fund raising event for foster care. Sponsored by the National Foster Parent Association. This event held in states all over the nation is entering it's 7th year. AFAPA held the first walk in Alabama last year in Montgomery, Al and had more than 100 to participate in the event. For more information about Walk Me Home visit the website walkmehome.org.

Greater Birmingham Walk – Completed May 12, 2012 over \$13,000 raised by Shelby County Foster Parent Association.

Mobile County Walk – September 29th, 2012 9:00 AM at Medal of Honor Park (Cottage Hill Park) in Mobile, Alabama. Sponsored by Mobile County Foster Adoptive Parent Association. Check out the fundraising page at www.firstgiving.com/walkmehome/mobile

Madison County Walk – Tentatively scheduled for October 6th, 2012 on the UAH Campus. More details in next newsletter. Sponsored by Madison County Foster Adoptive Parent Association. The fundraising page for this walk is www.firstgiving.com/walkmehome/madison

Alabama Foster Adoptive Parent Association Walk – November 3rd, 2012 at Huntingdon College located at 1500 Fairview Avenue, Montgomery, Al. The Event will also serve as the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association Recognition of November as National Adoption Month. There will be games for kids to play, vendor booths set up, and entertainment. Money raised for this walk to help support Foster Children Student Scholarship Fund. Sponsored by AFAPA. The fundraising page for this Walk is www.firstgiving.com/walkmehome/alabama2012



Alabama is one of the top fundraising states for the Walk Me Home event sponsored by the National Foster Parent Association. After this year we hope to be able to claim to be the top State in fundraising for Walk Me Home. Last year Tennessee held Walks in 4 major cities and raised over \$44,000. Let's show our neighbors to the north that we can do something other than have the best football teams in the nation. These events not only raise money to help with the needs of foster children but help raise awareness in the community of the needs for more foster and adoptive homes. There are many children in group homes because of the lack of foster homes. There are sibling groups split up because of the lack of foster homes to take all the children. There are hundreds of children waiting to be adopted because there are not enough adoptive homes to take them. Please help us support these walks in the coming months with your financial support and help us get the word out by telling your friends and family.

William Buddy Hooper
Co Chair of Walk Me Home Committee for
National Foster Parent Association



MEET OCTAVIUS



Octavius (known as "Tae") was born in February 2001. He is in need of special individualized care. He is a sweet boy with a pretty smile and friendly disposition. He loves to play. He has a close attachment to his sister and enjoys spending time with her. Tae is very wary of unfamiliar people and has to observe them for a while before interacting

with them. Octavius receives special education services in school. He has a severe level of intellectual disability and is non-verbal. He tries to communicate in his own way by grunting, pointing, etc. He does attempt to say words but they are rarely understandable except by those very familiar with him and his style of communication.

Tae functions on a 2-3 year old level, and behaves at this level as well. Due to his motor skills, he needs assistance with most, if not all, daily activities such as dressing, tying his shoes, bathing, eating, etc. Tae needs very consistent stability, structure and routine in order to function. He becomes confused and afraid, and sometimes angry, when his routine changes. Tae requires monitoring at all times due to not understanding danger, and he can wander off if not watched. He does not accept authority figures well, especially men. Octavius is affectionate and loving towards those he loves. He is in need of a very strong, stable, patient and tolerant family who would be able to commit themselves to providing lifelong supports for this special needs child.

*Photograph provided by
www.heartgalleryalabama.com*

MEET WILL & VANESSA



Will, born July 1999, is the youngest of a sibling group of two. He and his sister get along well. Will is somewhat timid and cautious when meeting new people. Will receives special education services with services in place to assist him with achieving academic success. Will is placed in a

therapeutic environment to help him with behavior issues. He sometimes needs extra help with self control and anger issues. He is acquiring coping skills to assist him with these. He participates in weekly therapy to address behavioral issues as they arise.

Will enjoys putting together models but does require some assistance. His favorite color is green and he loves Scooby Doo. Will plays softball with the Miracle League, enjoys riding his bike, playing with his remote control cars and listening to country music.

Vanessa, born October 1995 lives in the same home with her sibling. She is a very sweet and outgoing girl with special needs. She also receives special education services. She enjoys coloring and doing arts & crafts with assistance. Vanessa is very helpful with simple tasks around the house that require supervision, like loading the dish washer and putting away the silverware. She also receives services in a therapeutic environment for the behavioral issues she exhibits. Vanessa participates in therapy weekly. Her favorite colors are red and pink and she loves Hello Kitty. Vanessa is very energetic, she plays softball with the Miracle League, enjoys bowling and listening to country music. She is very protective over her younger brother.

*Photograph provided by
www.heartgalleryalabama.com*

MEET DRUCILLIA



Drucillia, born in November, 1998 is a beautiful young lady with an infectious smile. She loves to sing in the church choir, participate in church activities and be with family and friends. She also loves to visit water parks and go on vacations. Drucillia has a guitar, but needs lessons to learn to play correctly.

Drucillia needs medication to manage her Attention Deficit Hyperactivity and other mental health disorders. She is working on learning to respect others' space and not borrowing others' personal items.

Drucillia is a sweet young lady who needs someone to love her unconditionally.

Photograph provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

FOSTER CARE NUMBERS

THE NUMBERS

In Alabama there are approximately 5550 Children in foster care on any given day. Of course this number changes daily because of new children coming into care, children aging out, children being adopted, and children returning home. There are approximately 2500 foster homes to care for these children.

This year at the AFAPA conference a paper chain tree was created to show some of these numbers.

- The number of children birth to 14 is 3450 **Pink**
- Children over the age of 14 is 2100 **Yellow**
- Children adopted last year 428 **Blue**
- Children waiting to be adopted 550 and 275 of them have no identified resource to adopt them these are **Red** and **White**



Paper chains showing number of children in foster care in Alabama

GRAND FACTS

ALABAMA THE CHILDREN

148,127 children under age 18 live in homes where the householders are grandparents or other relatives (13% of all children under age 18 in Alabama.)
(U.S. 2010 Census)

Of these;

- 118,835 live with grandparents who are the householders (10.5% of the children in the state) and
- 29,292 live with other relatives who are the householders (2.6% of the children in the state).
(U.S. 2010 Census)
- 67,653 children live in homes with grandparent householders where grandparents are responsible for them* of these children
- 28,619 have no parents present in the home*

THE GRANDPARENTS*

63,529 grandparents are the householders and are responsible for their grandchildren living with them.

Of these:

- 55% of the grandparents are White and not Hispanic, 42% are Black/African American and 2% are Hispanic/Latino, and may be of any race
- 45% have no parents of the children present in the home.
- 70% are under age 60
- 24% live in poverty**
- 3,909 grandparents in Birmingham and 2,975 in Mobile city are the householders and are responsible for their grandchildren living with them.

In Alabama there are
approximately

5550

Children in foster care
on any given day.

*Comparable data are not currently available for homes where other relatives are the householders.

**100% of poverty level.

Data not specifically cited are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Detailed Table B09006 and Subject Tables S1001 and S1002. Additional data on related

A FOSTER PARENT'S STORY

Christina and Gerald Glenn are parents of one adult daughter and four teenage boys.

Christina and Gerald's journey to foster parenting began when their oldest son Tyler made friends on the football team with a boy named Keary. They did not know that Keary was a foster child or that he lived in a group home. They just knew that he and Tyler quickly became best of friends. Keary started hanging around more and the whole family immediately fell in love with him. Over the times that he visited they became aware of his past and being the mom that she is Christina took him under her wing. She cheered for him at football games and asked him how he was doing in school. Keary and the family began forming a strong bond. The thought crossed the Glenn's mind that maybe Keary should move in with them. They didn't mention it to Keary at this time because he was 17 years old and maybe he wouldn't want that. He seemed happy where he was and he also had an older brother KJ. Although not biological brothers Keary and KJ had been moved from group home to group home together for years. It didn't seem right to split them up. Over the next few weeks the Glenn's prayed for guidance on what was the right thing for Keary and KJ and what their role was to be in this. One Fall day, God answered their prayers very clear. While driving Keary to football practice he looked at Christina and asked if he could be part of their family. Her answer to him was that he already was. Both knew what he meant and it was time to find how to make it possible.

So the Journey began through the process to become foster parents for the Glenns. First was the call to DHR. They were told to expect a call back with more information. They waited and waited and no call or mail about what to do next. What complicated the matter was the Glenns live in one county and the boys were from another county. So they were trying to work with both counties to get answers as well as the group home where the boys lived. One person would tell them they had to go through the other county and the other county would tell them the same thing. No one seemed to be working together to help these boys move from a group home to the home they wanted to be in. After 2 months of this back and forth there were still no answers. They wanted to give the boys the chance at a family experience soon as possible. Christina again prayed to help and her prayers were answered when a friend gave her the number for the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association. That same day she had phone numbers and email addresses and began another journey to become a foster parent. With the help of AFAPA she was headed in the right direction finally. This was the first good news and the beginning of the emotional

roller coaster. Finally someone was not only helping her but helping to make sure the boys wishes were heard as well. She rushed to school to tell the boys the process had finally begun.

It was now approaching the holiday season and the goal was to have the boys in their home before Christmas. Problem #1 no one was offering any GPS classes until February. This was the first blow. It looked like by the time they became foster parents the boys would be in college. Then another prayer was answered when the group home where the boys lived started a GPS class for them. So now paperwork is filled out interviews done and looks like they are on the right track.

It seemed every time they turned around there was something else they had to do. Some of them small things like putting a chain lock at the top of the door because they had a pool. Do they not know these boys are teenagers and one over 6 ft tall. One county told them to get more fire extinguishers but not what kind so you guessed it they got the wrong kind and had to get more.

One worker told them they would do overnight visits every other week end until the next Summer just to see how things were going. This worker also told them she didn't support this family becoming foster parents to these boys. Christina was determined and got visits every week end. Christina left the meeting to get the kids from School. She felt sad and heart broken that she was being supported in their efforts to help these boys. Seeing the joy on the boys face when she told them about the week end visit made those feelings go away for a time. They were thrilled. She still got a tear in her eye when she had to watch 2 of her boys

“Being a foster family was never in our life plans. God had different plans for our family on that fall day when we met 2 amazing boys”.



Christina speaks at the AFAPA conference

get in the van to go back to the group home. She made a decision to stop being sad and start fighting for these boys that her family loved. She was not going to give up.

Things really start getting confusing because of rules DHR had and rules the group home had were not always the same. DHR would approve overnight visits and the group home would take them away. It all came to a head during the Christmas break. They had scheduled to have the boys for 2 weeks during Christmas. The day Christina went to pick them up there was a note on the bulletin board that said the boys could only go from December 23rd to 26th. Christina called everyone she could think of at DHR and the group home. It was a holiday week end nothing was going to be done. They were going to have to say goodbye again. What was puzzled her was they would be finished with the training in a month and this 2 weeks would help all of them adjust to the new living situation. Giving time for children to adjust was something we had learned in GPS Class. So many twists and turns and so many ups and downs. Once again Christina got on the phone to AFAPA she had to vent her feeling to someone. She was mad and her heart ached for the boys. She was like a mamma bear wanting to lash out at someone. Mrs Hooper was polite and brief with her. Within an hour Christina received a call from SDHR that the boys would be returning to her home for the rest of the Christmas Holidays. She felt like she had won the Grand Prize. Thank you AFAPA and Mrs. Hooper for all your help. The Glenn family would be complete for the rest of the Holiday Season.

Even though the situations were working out it made Christina even more determined to get their Foster Parent Approval soon as possible. No CPR class scheduled for a month? She scheduled her own. DHR added a class they completed it. 3 more weeks of GPS classes they did them in 2. DHR wanted 3 reference letters they gave them 12. They were not supposed to complete the process until the end of January but by the end of the 1st week they were done. They could breathe again...The boys moved in for good January 17th. Christina "I have to say this was one of the best days of my life, my family felt complete." They celebrated by having a surprise party for the boys with all the important people in their lives and people who would become a part of their life. Christina "It was a wonderful night, what an amazing feeling to know that all of my kids were home and no more being afraid to unpack suitcases.

Christina said she has been asked many times, knowing now what the process is to be a foster parent, would you do it again? Her answer is **YES!**

The following is in Christina Glenn's own words.

Even though I don't always agree with the policies and rules of DHR or Group Homes when it comes to the children, I know

that they are there for the best interest of these children. I know their social workers have many more than just my 2 boys to look after. I also know that since we have been approved DHR has been wonderful to us. I understand that what we went through was nothing compared to what these kids go through. They deserve the best. My advice for foster parents is to remember that for social workers, this is their job. They have rules and policies to follow. My advice for social workers is to try and remember that for foster parents this is their family, their life. There can be a good balance.

Also, find an advocate like the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association. Little did I know that day when my friend gave me a phone number that they would play such a huge role in mine and the boys lives. Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association are advocates for the children. The president of AFAPA and his wife spent hours, days and weeks on our case.



Buddy Hooper presents scholarship to KJ Jones

They didn't just have my back they stood next to me, teaching, guiding me, and putting me in touch with the right people. When I needed answers or needed a shoulder to cry on they were there. They were also behind the scenes getting things done and making sure our case was handled properly. My family is forever grateful for them because I truly feel I could not have done it alone.

So again I've been asked the question, knowing now what it's like to be a foster parent, would you do it again? Again my answer is YES! The simple things, things that we never think about bring such a smile to their face. The first time to decorate a Christmas tree or when I gave them their first house key or they received mail with their name and address on it. To have family cheering in the stands at a game. To be able to have friends over to watch movies. Just to have a place to call home and people inside that love you unconditionally and forever.

MEET JOHN MICHAEL



John Michael, born February, 1998, has dark brown hair and brown eyes. He has a full scale IQ of 51. He can write his name and knows colors. He enjoys participating in all sports and is especially good at basketball. He especially enjoys riding his bike outside. John Michael requires constant supervision because he has impulsive behaviors and does not recognize danger. He needs education in personal hygiene such as brushing his teeth, bathing, toileting, etc.

John Michael is a neurological condition known as Chiari I, where a large portion of his 16th Chromosome is missing. This neurological disorder manifests itself at the bottom part of the brain, the cerebellum, descends out of the skull and crowds the spinal cord, putting pressure on both the brain and spine.

John Michael will need a family that is able to provide lifetime care for him and meets his special needs.

*Photograph provided by
www.heartgalleryalabama.com*

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



MEET MELINDA



Melinda, born in September 2000, is smart and a good student. She is on grade level. She enjoys singing, listening to music, dance, stuffed animals and eating. Melinda is creative and likes to make arts and crafts for her peers and family. She likes animals, especially horses. Melinda likes to be around her peers and her other family members. Melinda has three other

siblings -- an older sister and a younger sister and brother. She is family-oriented and enjoys being a part of a family. She attends church and likes being involved with her community. She is a kind child and enjoys helping others. She is a good role model for others and tries her best to stay out of trouble. Melinda is a responsible child and is able to complete her daily chores with some reminders. Melinda has overcome several obstacles in her life and continues to make progress. She has a great personality and many other positive characteristics.

MEET JAMES

James, born in June 1998 is a happy young man in need of a two-parent family. As he has entered his teens, he recognizes the importance of a strong, positive male role model and has asked us to help him find his own family that can meet his needs. He would love a father that would be actively involved with him. James wants to play football in school next year and is pursuing his interest in martial arts at this time.



James needs medication to control his Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. His favorite subject is science. He has not decided what he wants to be when he grows up and is keeping all options open.

*Photograph provided by
www.heartgalleryalabama.com*

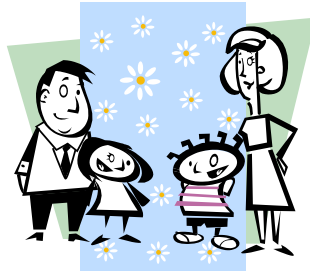


Foster & Adoptive Parent Association of Huntsville/Madison County

July - August 2012 Newsletter

Hello Everyone! I hope you are having a fun and safe summer. Since it is summertime and the living is easy—but to enjoy the fun, be sure to heed the most important summer safety tips.

Here are some top summertime hazards to be aware of so you can make the most of the carefree moments with your kids while keeping your family happy all season long.



- Lather everyone up with sunscreen.
- Pack a **bag** that includes extra sunscreen, sunglasses, hats, a small first-aid kit, plenty of water or other drinks, snacks, extra cash and your cell phone in case you need it.
- Make sure everyone is wearing appropriate clothing -- light colored, nothing too heavy and OK for the activity that is planned.

- If you have a pool, make it impossible for a child to access the pool without the assistance of an adult.
- Never leave a child alone in the car.
- On the playground: Upon arrival, check out the equipment. Is everything anchored properly? Is the set in good shape? Touch everything. Is it too hot for bare skin to touch?

The Mission of The FAPA of Huntsville/Madison County is to:

- Advocate on behalf of foster and adoptive children & parents.
- Provide and promote quality training and education.
- Develop a resource network for foster and adoptive parents.

The Foster & Adoptive Parent Association of Huntsville/Madison County ("FAPAHMC") is open to all resource parents (foster, adoptive, kinship and non-relative caregivers) in Huntsville/Madison County as well as those interested in being advocates!

Upcoming Events

Our next **FAPAHMC** meeting will be **August 2, 2012** starting at 6:00 pm at the **Harvest Youth Club** located at 230 Lockhart Road, Harvest, AL 35749 (phone) 256-217-0320.
(DHR Credit hours given for attending meeting)

Guest Speaker: Patricia Corbitt from APAC. The topic is Lying, Cheating, & Stealing.

The **Adoptive Family Support Group (AFG)** meeting is the second Monday of each month at 6pm-7:30 pm, First United Methodist Church, 120 Green St, Huntsville. A potluck meal is served and we have groups for parents, children 8-18 and childcare is provided for infants-7 years of age.
(There is no fee for the group)

Foster & Adoptive Morning Mom's Group: Every Thursday 10am-12pm at Willowbrook Church on Bailey Cove Road. For more information please contact **Jennifer** at jenniferscody@gmail.com or **Jessica** at jessica.hagins@gmail.com.

**We will discuss hosting a "Walk Me Home" fundraiser tentative scheduled for October 2012.
My new email is: sylviafapa@yahoo.com - 256-417-7080.*

Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association Annual Conference May 10th – 12th, 2012 Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center



Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association Annual Conference



Commissioner Nancy Buckner addressing the Conference Participants.



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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 Association Annual Conference

