



# FASD NEWS AND VIEWS

A Michigan Coalition for Fetal Alcohol Resources, Education and Support (MCFARES) Newsletter



Established in 2003

## Questions We Are Asked:

*Our 3-year-old son was recently diagnosed with fetal alcohol syndrome. We are overwhelmed by all the information we have received. What is the most important thing for us to consider?*

The time right after receiving a diagnosis can be the most confusing and overwhelming time for parents. You may have received a lot of information, advice and predictions about your future.

Some of this advice may come from the professionals in your life and some from family and friends. These offers will continue to come and you may have to assess whether or not the information is helpful/valuable for your life or whether you'll have to dismiss it (and, perhaps, make a choice about whether or not the giver of the advice

needs to be in your life). Throughout his life you'll be making some tough decisions.

Here are some general ideas that may help make the journey a little more smooth:

- Start with yourself.
- Consider joining a support and/or information group
- Seek out services
- Remember the "S" in FASD
- Learn how to advocate for your son
- Consider alternative therapies
- Develop a system to

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organize information

**Start with yourself:** Your son will need you to be physically, mentally and emotionally healthy for many years. Think about what activities you have in your life that make you really happy and fulfilled and pursue those

## Questions We Are Asked, cont'd

(such as hobbies, faith-based activities, educational activities). Find ways to take time for yourself so that you have the strength to care for others in your family. Continue to nurture and maintain supportive relationships with your spouse, family and friends. Though the road is not guaranteed to be rocky, there may be times when you need to lean on others for help. Know who you can trust to be supportive and helpful and seek them out when you need help.



your family.

**Remember the "S" in FASD:** Fetal Alcohol

Spectrum Disorders are just that . . . a "spectrum." Effects are found within some predictable areas such as medical (vision and/or hearing problems, low body height and weight, organ problems), educational (difficulty paying attention, learning disabilities, poor memory, speech and language delays) and neurological (poor coordination, sensory issues). The type and severity of effects, however, will differ from person to person. When symptoms are identified, early recognition and intervention may help to decrease the long term affects.

(<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/facts.html>)

**Consider joining a support**

**group/information group:** There may be times when you'd like to hear from other families who have walked the same path as you. Ask the professionals you work with or do an online search for support groups in your area

(<http://www.nofas.org/resource/directory.aspx> or in Michigan

<http://www.mcfares.org/page12/page12.html>).

On-line support groups may also prove helpful. Through these groups you may find resources and events that may be of use to

**Seek out services:** A diagnosis may entitle your son to educational or other support services in your area. Early intervention services are available to children ages 0-3 (in Michigan, call 1-800-327-5966 or go to [http://www.1800earlyon.org/online\\_refer](http://www.1800earlyon.org/online_refer)

## Questions We Are Asked, cont'd

[ral.php](#)). After age 3, contact your local school district for an evaluation, or contact Head Start (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices>). Once your child reaches school age, special education services may be needed. It will be helpful to learn about the laws regarding these services, your child's rights and how to request these services (visit <http://www.wrightslaw.com> <http://www.arcmi.org/pdf/IEP%20Brochure.pdf> <http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/>).

Learn how to advocate for your son. Be clear about what your priorities are and pursue services and supports that meet those goals. When treatment plans, educational plans or any other services are developed for your son, share your insights and help to develop the goals. Ask for clarification for any information that is unclear and clarify inaccurate information. As your son grows, teach him to



advocate for himself. Help him learn how to ask for and accept assistance and to clearly communicate his needs.

**Consider alternative therapies.** One of the alternative interventions that has received a lot of attention in recent years is choline supplementation. Choline has been shown to decrease hyperactivity and increase working memory

(<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh341/4-14.htm>). Some families consider other alternative approaches including biofeedback, vitamins, herbal supplements. Internet research and consultation with doctors and other families who have tried these methods may provide you with information to help you choose an approach that may work for you (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/treatments.html#AlternativeApproaches>).

### ***Develop a system to organize information:***

For many children on the spectrum, the affects of pre-natal exposure will last a lifetime and the child will receive services and supports from many different sources.

## Questions We Are Asked, cont'd

Keeping all the information organized will be of immense importance for all those who are working your child and family. Consider starting with a binder system. Divide the binder into the following sections: medical, school, supports, other. In those sections, put reports/information from each of those sources. Rather than 3-hole punching the documents, consider using clear plastic sleeves that will allow you to add and remove documents easily. Develop a document that is a running list of all the specialists your child has seen including contact information, dates seen, diagnosis and recommendations given. If tests were done, include the date, source and outcome of the tests. These documents may be

helpful to other professionals in your child's life since a running summary is easier to read than each individual report. Include brochures/business cards for programs/doctors you may want to look into in the future. With everything in one place, it'll be easier to share information with those who need it and to bring with you when you visit a new professional or attend meetings.

*If you have a question you would like to see answered in this column, please send it to Charisse at [charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:charisse@mcfares.org) with "Newsletter Question" in the subject line.*

## It's a Matter of Perspective: Understanding How Our Kids' Brains Work



Scenario: 22-year-old daughter who has FAS recently acquired a new cell phone and is frustrated about the poor reception.

Daughter (speaking to mother): "I just don't get it. You could hear me but I couldn't hear you. I was even standing right next to a telephone pole when I made the call and I still couldn't hear you."

## Bragging Rights

### Gabby's Native American Tribe Report



Gabby received an A+ on her Native American Tribe report in February. She had 99 out of 100 points. Her tribe was the Menominee. (The fact that she could say the word should have been worth 50 points! HA!) The report assignment was given out in mid-January and was due in mid-February. She had 3 pages of questions with lines for the answers that she had to fill in with full sentences the week before the report was due. Every night she would come home from school and answer at least one question. After getting her notes back from the teacher, the children needed to write or type a one page report from their notes, draw a cover sheet with illustrations and make a tri-fold poster with pictures from books or the internet. Gabby typed her report by herself (I helped with spacing.), drew all the pictures on her cover sheet, picked out all the pictures for her poster and labeled them. She did a lot of work, was very methodical about getting it done and never complained about it. She really enjoyed it actually.

Submitted by Laurel S.

### Cindy Made the JV Soccer Team

Cindy, a 9<sup>th</sup> grader, tried out for and made the JV soccer team. She's very excited to play for her school.

Submitted by Nancy C.

### Megan Takes the Plunge



Megan and her teammates raised over \$3000 for Special Olympics by jumping in the Polar Plunge in Detroit (Dad jumped too!).

Submitted by Barb P.

### Perfect Attendance for Joy

Joy received a perfect attendance award for second trimester this year. This is a real accomplishment for Joy as she has many medical issues and has generally had to take time off school when she is sick and for medical appointments.

Submitted by Nancy C.

To submit your "Brag" for the next newsletter, email the information to Charisse at [charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:charisse@mcfares.org) with "Newsletter Brag" in the subject line.

## MCFARES Meeting Dates

Meetings are generally held on the fourth Monday of each month from 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. at the Arc-Macomb offices. Contact Charisse at [Charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:Charisse@mcfares.org) for more information.

April 23, 2012

May 21, 2012

June 25, 2012

July 27, 2012

August 24, 2012

Visit MCFARES on the web at

<http://www.mcfares.org/index.html>

and on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/93728110628/>

## Help Us Help Families

Here is how you can help:

- Use GoodSearch when you search the internet. They will donate a penny to us every time you do
- Use GoodShop.com when you shop online. They work with more than 2,600 major brands, have over 100,000 coupons and donate a percentage of every purchase you make to us
- Enroll in GoodDining.com. They will donate up to 6% of every dollar you spend when you eat at one of 10,000 participating restaurants
- Download the MCFARES – Michigan Coalition for Fetal Alcohol Resources Education and Support (Clinton Township) toolbar to earn donations every time you search and shop. You can also get coupon alerts and donation reminders as you visit any of the 2,600 stores in GoodShop. Get it here: <http://www.goodsearch.com/toolbar/mcfares-michigan-coalition-for-fetal-alcohol-resources-education-and-support>

## Super Kids/Smart Choices Summer Socialization Program

We are in the process of planning for our Super Kids/Smart Choices summer socialization program. Though details are not yet available, we are planning to hold the event in July at a school in Macomb County.

The program is available to all school-aged children who have a diagnosis on the fetal alcohol spectrum. We expect the \$25 fee to remain the same as in past years. If you are interested in enrolling your child in the program

(you do not need to be a Macomb County resident), please contact Charisse at [charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:charisse@mcfares.org).



## Did you Know . . .

MCFARES members are available to provide in-service training to those who serve families and individuals on the fetal alcohol spectrum. Topics available include FASD101, Educational Strategies, Behavior Supports and more.

We generally charge \$100 per presenter per hour and fees are negotiable. Please contact Charisse at [charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:charisse@mcfares.org) for more information.



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## **Support Groups for FASD in Michigan**

### **(not all groups are specifically for FASD support)**

(Please phone or email contact person prior to attending to ensure that group is still meeting. If information has changed, please email Charisse at [Charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:Charisse@mcfares.org)).

#### **Alpena County**

FASD Family Support Group, Meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month; 6:30 – 8 p.m., Thunder Bay Transportation Authority, 3022 US23 S, Alpena. Contact Mary Schalk at [maryschalk@verizon.net](mailto:maryschalk@verizon.net) or 989-734-2877 for more information.

#### **Eaton County**

Eaton County Foster Adopt Support Group, Meets 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday monthly, 6 – 8:30 p.m. Pot luck dinner at 6:00 p.m. Group/training at 6:30 p.m. Childcare available. Charlotte Assembly of God Church, Charlotte, across from Meijer on M-50. Contact Michelle for more information at [besa\\_93@yahoo.com](mailto:besa_93@yahoo.com).

#### **Jackson County**

Jackson County, Parenting Challenging Children. Meets 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month, 1 – 2 p.m. Cascades Fellowship CRC, 2390 W. High Street, Jackson, MI 49203. Monthly meeting includes family lunch, child care, crafts and videos for children and youth. Speaker occasionally scheduled. Contact Rev. Bob Devries or his wife Alice at 517-784-8034.

#### **Kent County**

West Michigan Support Group, Meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month, 7 – 8:30 p.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church, 47 Jefferson Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI 49503. Contact Barbara Wybrecht, 616-241-9128 or [bmwybrecht@aol.com](mailto:bmwybrecht@aol.com) or Corry Tait, 616-878-1839 for more information.

Self-Advocates with and FASD in Action (SAFA), generally meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. The meeting is for adults age 18 and up who have an official FASD diagnosis. Contact Rob Wybrecht for more information, [rob1195@yahoo.com](mailto:rob1195@yahoo.com).



### **Macomb County**

Project SAFE (Supportive Activities for Everyone), Generally on a Friday or Saturday evening from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. at various locations in Macomb County. Families meet for pot-luck dinner followed by supervised play for the children and support group time for adults. Contact Charisse at [Charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:Charisse@mcfares.org) or 586-329-6722.

Brunch Bunch, Monthly, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, 9 a.m. – 11 a.m., In Clinton Township, Contact Charisse at [Charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:Charisse@mcfares.org) or 586-329-6722 for location details.

### **Monroe County**

Adoptive Moms Group, Meets 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month, 7 – 9 p.m. Original Gravity, 440 County Street, Milan, MI 48160. Contact Theresa Light at [Theresa.light@yahoo.com](mailto:Theresa.light@yahoo.com) for more information as dates and locations sometimes change.

### **Washtenaw County**

Ann Arbor Support Group, Meets 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month except November (meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday) and December (no meeting), 7 -9 p.m. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Education Center, Classroom #5, 5305 East Huron Drive. Contact Betsy for more information, [betsysoden@juno.com](mailto:betsysoden@juno.com).

### **On-line Support**

Families and Supports Affected by FASD: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FaSAFASD>

*Note: No liability is assumed with respect to use of or inability to use the information contained in this newsletter. Although every precaution has been taken, the authors assume no liability for errors or omissions. No liability is assumed for damages resulting from the use of the information contained herein.*

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## MCFARES Member Agencies

- Arc Services of Macomb (fiduciary)
- Family members of affected individuals
- Macomb Intermediate School District, Early On
- Fraser Public Schools
- Devon Behavioral Consulting
- Macomb Family Services
- Macomb County Health Department
- Madonna University
- Macomb County Office of Substance Abuse
- Oakland University School of Nursing



*MCFARES needs you.  
Call us at 586-329-  
6722 to find out how  
you can help.*

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## MCFARES

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44050 N. Gratiot

Clinton Township, MI 48036

[Recipient]

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Address Line 3

Address Line 4