

# FASD News and Views



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



Established in 2003

## Questions We Are Asked

**Question:** *Our family is in the process of adopting three children who are of a different race than my husband and me. Our extended families are advising us against going through with the adoptions because they're afraid that the children will not be accepted in our community and the children will feel resentful toward us as they grow up. We're going through with the adoption despite their concerns. How can we prepare ourselves for what lies ahead?*

**Answer:** Your family may fear that your children might experience discrimination or prejudice. Search for places within your community that will be supportive of your family and work to educate others who may not be as supportive. By learning about your children's race and by linking with others who also have mixed-race families, you can prepare yourself for comments and questions from well-meaning family, friends and the occasional stranger. You will find many useful books to offer guidance on transracial adoption, some of which you'll read for your knowledge and others you can read with your children or perhaps share with your children's school or social groups. Research skin and hair care needs to make sure that you're addressing their needs appropriately.

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Within your community you may find cultural activities for your family to participate in that will link your children with their heritage and help you to learn more about their culture. In your home, provide your children with toys, games and books representative of their culture and share these with extended family and with

others who are involved in the lives of your children (teachers, friends, coaches, etc.). Learn about the religious practices of your children and consider continuing involvement in that practice. Also, learn about holiday traditions and meals that go with those holidays. Prepare those meals with your children and share them with your extended family.

Here are some books:

[Cross Cultural Adoption: How to Answer Questions from Family, Friends and Community](#) by Amy Coughlin and Caryn Abramowitz

[Adopted and Loved Forever](#) by Annetta E. Dellinger

Here are some websites:

Adoptive Families

<http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/transracial-adoption.php>

Adoption.com

<http://transracial.adoptionblogs.com/>

Your kids are going to norm off your behaviors: they will respond to questions, judgments, discrimination in the way that you respond. You can model how to respond to those operating out of a lack of knowledge and/or their own personal issues. Learning will be a process and on-going as your children change and grow. Be open to learning, researching and connecting with other families with whom you can share similar experiences.

*If you have a question about living or working with someone who has an FASD, please email your question to*

[charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:charisse@mcfares.org).

## Things Our Kids Say

Joy, age 11, was talking with her parents about a movie she had watched in school. The movie was about Martin Luther King, Jr. and Joy believed that MLK was able to go back in time because the beginning of the movie showed him as an adult and later in the movie he was shown as a young child. And, since the movie was shown at school, it had to be real. No amount of explaining could help her to understand that the film was explaining different parts of King's life but it didn't mean that he went back in time and became young again. She saw the movie very literally: at the beginning of the movie, he was an adult. Later in the movie he was a child. To Joy, that meant he went back in time.

Leah: Daddy can you lift up the couch?

Dad: Why?

Leah: I'm looking for my monkey purse.

Dad: Oh, ok <lifts up couch>

Leah: It's not there!

Dad: Where's the last place you had it?

Leah: Upstairs.

Dad: Then why did you ask me to lift the couch?



From St. Ignace Visitors Bureau

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## Getting Ready for Respite

### Preparing the Child Who Was Prenatally Exposed to Alcohol

Barbara Wybrecht

Theoretically the most successful respite, based on the needs of the child, would occur in his or her own home, as it provides the best opportunity for maintaining consistency and predictability, everything is familiar and comfortable. Usual family routines could continue which give security to all children but especially those with a Fetal Alcohol spectrum Disorder.. Pre-planning is crucial to the success of a respite experience for all. A week-end respite with a new worker would not be recommended. All parties need to work up to a week-end experience gradually.

#### Preparing the Child

The following will help with a gradual approach:

- Short visits with the worker with parents present will help both the child and the worker.
- The child can get to know the worker while still feeling secure with a parent present.
- The respite worker can observe the child's behavior and also take note of strategies the family is able to use successfully.
- Usual family routines can be observed and tried out with the parent present to find any glitches or barriers to success that the worker might experience.

When the actual day arrives, a schedule for the day should be written out, illustrated with photos, pictures from magazines, or stick figure drawings so the child and the worker can be reminded of the flow of activities. Posting this on the refrigerator is helpful. Laminating the schedule helps preserve it.

In the interest of consistency and comfort at meal time, it is often helpful if a casserole previously prepared by Mom or Dad is the main course. Due to the fact that meal times can be problematic, it would be helpful if the worker could experience a meal with the entire family sometime prior to the respite day. This will give the worker an idea of how long the child is able to sit at the table, whether she needs one food on the plate at a time, whether the child, even if older, needs to be secured in his chair during meal time, whether the child needs help with feeding, cutting, or drinking from a cup. Remember children with an FASD are often 3, 4, or 5 years younger developmentally and socially than their chronological age. A six year old may appear to be more like a three year old. Therefore in order for him to experience success we need to set expectations equal to those for a three year old.

## Preparing the Respite Worker

Folks not accustomed to children with an FASD will not realize that constant supervision will be required, no matter what the age. Lack of fear, lack of a sense of danger, lack of impulse control as well as memory problems make it imperative the child is not left alone or out of the respite workers sight.

*Barbara Wybrecht is a clinical nurse, specialist trainer, and consultant in the area of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorders. Her lengthy career in FAS/FASD/ARND advocacy and awareness began when she adopted a son, Rob, born in 1973, who was diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Since then she has been instrumental in the development of diagnostic clinics and support groups that have been beneficial to those affected by FASD throughout Michigan and on a national level.*

## Support Group

**PARENT TO PARENT**

**PARENTS SUPPORTING PARENTS**

**PARENTING AND RECOVERING**

*The above are suggestions for name of group.*

Do you have a child:

- Whose behaviors are frustrating to you and his/her teachers?
- Whose behaviors don't change with the usual parenting approaches
- Is small for his age
- Will quickly go with a complete stranger
- Does not seem to understand simple directions
- Appears to have no fears or sense of danger
- Is more active than other children the same age?

Is it possible that this child could have been exposed to alcohol before birth or received alcohol in his baby bottle or breast milk after birth?

- ❖ If you would like to meet other parents in this same situation...
- ❖ If you would like to find ways to get your child to "mind" you...
- ❖ If you would like to learn how to explain your child's needs and differences to the school and get help for you and your child then...

Come to our support group, a confidential sharing of frustrations and successes, a place to learn from each other and to help each other. No shaming or blaming, just sharing and caring.

**PLACE**

**TIME**

*Here's a sample flyer or newspaper announcement for the purpose of starting a support group. This group must be run by parents for parents. A professional/agency is needed to provide a place to meet, to send out reminder cards and put announcements in the paper or on the radio and T.V. Refreshments would be a welcome addition for most groups.*

## Braggs

### Gabby

Gabby S. submitted a Holiday card suggestion to NOFAS and it was featured on the NOFAS website. Here's the card:



### Cindy

Cindy C. has been receiving very positive reports from her school. Emails from teachers have reported that she has been doing a great job of focusing and really making an effort to get organized this trimester. Cindy is a high school junior and has worked very hard to get to this level of success.



Congratulations, Cindy!

### Jacob

Jacob K. completed his Career Assessment at Michigan Career and Technical Institute and has chosen to train to become a Certified Nurse's Assistant. He'll return in May for the training.



Congratulations, Jacob!

## Project S.A.F.E.

### (Supportive Activities for Everyone)

Project S.A.F.E. is a monthly pot-luck activity for families who are living with FASD. Our families come together for a meal, play time for the children and time for support for adults. Project S.A.F.E. is held at Fellowship Chapel at 12875 14 Mile Road, Sterling Heights, MI 48312. Our scheduled dates are: February 8, March 8, April 12, May 10. We meet from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. If you're able to join us, please contact Charisse at [charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:charisse@mcfares.org) (unless other arrangements are made, these meetings are reserved for family members only).



## Simply Do Good for MCFARES with Goodsearch!

### simply do good.

There's a simple way to automatically raise money for MCFARES. Just use Yahoo! powered Goodsearch.com as your search engine, and they'll donate about a penny to MCFARES every time you do a search.

### so, how can i simply do good?

It's easy. Just choose MCFARES as your cause. Then, as you go about your daily activities, you'll be raising money for MCFARES – at no cost to you! You can watch the dollars add up right here on the site. And, as you share your actions with your friends, you can inspire them to also make a difference every single day. The three primary ways you can earn money are through searching the Internet, shopping online and dining out (but keep your eye on us – this is just the beginning!) Here's a quick explanation of some of them:

- [Goodsearch](#): Search the Internet with our patent-protected, Yahoo!-powered search engine (just like you'd search on any other search engine), and we'll donate about a penny for nearly all searches to MCFARES.
- [Goodshop](#): Shop at one of our more than 2,800 participating stores (from Amazon to Zazzle) and a percentage of what you spend will be donated to MCFARES at no cost to you. Oh, and by the way,

there's a big added bonus here too.

Goodshop lists more than 100,000 coupons and deals so you could save money while doing good!

- [Gooddining](#): Dine at one of our 10,000 participating restaurants around the country and a percentage of what you spend will go to MCFARES – again at no cost to you.
- [Good-to-go add-ons](#): The GoodShop To-Go Button and Goodsearch Plug-in install in less than 30 seconds and help you to earn donations for MCFARES when you shop and search even when you don't visit Goodsearch first!
- [Goodsurveys](#): When you complete a survey on our online surveys platform, we'll make a donation of about \$1 to MCFARES!
- [Goodgames](#): Play fun and entertaining games to support your favorite cause! When you play any combination of our goodgames three times, we'll donate a penny to MCFARES.
- [Goodtvads](#): Watch commercials from your favorite products and brands to raise money for MCFARES!

### ready to start making a difference?

If you're ready to join our movement and simply do good today go to [www.goodsearch.com/choosecause](http://www.goodsearch.com/choosecause) and enter "MCFARES" as the cause name.



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## We're Living with FASD:

### 10... No, Make That 16 Things We'd Like You to Know

1. This is NOT just a phase. My child will NOT outgrow his brain damage.
2. Some days my child will be 'on', some days my child will be 'off.' It doesn't mean she's completely forgotten it, it means she can't locate the information in her brain.
3. FASDs are not contagious. You can't get it from playing with her, sitting next to her or touching her.
4. Parents raising children with an FASD sometimes need a break. Consider offering free childcare for an evening or weekend.
5. No, it's not okay if you yell at my child, give him snotty, mean looks or otherwise try to intimidate him.
6. Yes, my son enjoys a lot of the same things as other kids. Please try to include him. He will love it and I will be almost pathetically grateful if you make him feel welcome.
7. You aren't helping when you say my son "looks normal."
8. We're doing the best we can. You're hurting rather than helping when you judge us, condescend to us or withdraw from our lives. If you really, genuinely want to help us, please be willing to learn about our kids and ask us how you can help.
9. FASDs are a physical disability and deserve support just like blindness, paralysis, deafness, etc. He's not lazy or bad for having trouble with a task just as a child who is blind isn't at fault for not being able to see the page.
10. Don't minimize what we are going through or our family's stress level. We may look fine on the outside, but if we tell you we are emotionally exhausted, trust us that we ARE.
11. Don't tell me that God won't give me more than I can handle. God is with me, but my child is not some kind of test from the Almighty.
12. Hitting him will not make him behave.
13. Don't tell me that I should just appreciate the services he is receiving.
14. Don't tell me my child is demon possessed.
15. We love our children: absolutely, unconditionally and always. Our children experience significant daily challenges and sometimes we're overwhelmed. Please do not mistake being overwhelmed with failing to love our children.
16. Don't tell me how lucky he is because he no longer lives in an orphanage. A child who has had to live one day in an orphanage is NOT lucky. A child who has been taken from his or her birth mother even under the best circumstances is NOT lucky. A child who has an FASD is NOT lucky!



## 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@frontier.com](mailto:maryschalk@frontier.com) 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. Eaton Intermediate School District, 1790 Packard Highway, Charlotte, MI 48813. Located right next door to Walmart. Contact Michelle for more information at [besa\\_93@yahoo.com](mailto:besa_93@yahoo.com).

#### Kent County

West Michigan FASD 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 Sandy Kezenius, 616-874-9522; Corry Tait, 616-550-4273; or Barbara Wybrecht, 616-241-9126 or [bmwybrecht@gmail.com](mailto:bmwybrecht@gmail.com) 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.

### 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>

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MCFARES is the Michigan NOFAS Affiliate

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## MCFARES Member Agencies

Arc Services of Macomb  
(fiduciary)

Macomb County Office of  
Substance Abuse

Family members of affected  
individuals

Oakland University School of  
Nursing

Macomb Intermediate School  
District, Early On

Macomb County Community  
Mental Health

Fraser Public Schools

Macomb Family Services

Macomb County Health  
Department

Madonna University



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

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## MCFARES

44050 N. Gratiot  
Clinton Township, MI 48036

RECIPIENT  
Address Line 1  
Address Line 2  
Address Line 3  
Address Line 4

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