



# FASD NEWS AND VIEWS

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



Established in 2003

## Questions We Are Asked:

*This winter is predicted to be cold, snowy and more severe than recent winters. We are almost guaranteed school cancellations. The severe cold will probably prevent us from going outside a lot. How do we deal with being inside so much?*

The winter weather can present challenges for our families. School cancellations can upset a child's need for consistency and routine. Knowing that this winter is going to be tough, it might be wise to plan ahead.

If you work, who will care for your child(ren)? What activities do your children enjoy? What new activities can you introduce on a bad-weather day?

We try to keep our schedule consistent with morning and evening routines but add special events to our day as much as we can. Save some toys, games or crafts or introduce new ones on snow days.

We have special movie days at home when the weather is so bad that we must stay inside. We might eat dinner for breakfast or breakfast for dinner. We might try a new recipe or involve the kids in meal preparation.

We keep a supply of games and crafts that we pull out only on inside days (be they snow days or sick days). These items are

quietly put away upon return to the normal schedule.

We adapt one of our travel games for home use. Gather several lunch bags and label each with an hour of the day (or ½ hour if appropriate) and put an activity, snack or small toy in the bag. Open the bag and enjoy the contents at the designated time.

Other suggestions include putting together a scavenger hunt, playing bingo with Skittles (or other small treat) for counters, and "Name that Tune".

If we're able to get out of the house, we play in the snow or go sledding at a local hill (we bring snacks so the kids don't get hungry, we make sure they're warm and protected from the cold, we have an "escape" plan in case the excitement causes inappropriate behaviors). Sometimes just going for a ride in a different area of town adds some interest to the day.

Consider activities like bowling or bounce houses (unless these activities provide too much

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stimulation). Contact these businesses before bad weather days to learn their hours and fees (and plans to be open in inclement weather).

Arrange play-dates when the weather keeps the kids out of school. Other families may be in the same situation as you and may enjoy the company and diversion.

When planning for snow days, keep the U.S. Coast Guard motto in mind: Semper Paratus (Always Prepared).

## Project S.A.F.E.: By Families for Families

Project S.A.F.E. (Supportive Activities for Everyone) began in February, 2008 by a few families with the goal of providing a safe, supportive environment for families to enjoy an evening together.

We meet monthly for a pot-luck dinner (we've enjoyed everything from pizza, to Chinese, to home-made enchiladas, lasagna, BBQ's and so much more), support and supervised recreation. For the last year a local baker has provided a birthday cake each month for Project S.A.F.E. families to enjoy and to celebrate their children.

We find that many of the adults look forward to Project SAFE evenings as much as the children do and many of us plan our other activities around Project SAFE so that we don't miss a gathering.

Many families have said that Project SAFE is one

of the few places they can go where the children's behaviors are understood and families aren't judged for choices they have to make.

Though Project SAFE is held in Macomb County, we have families traveling from other counties to join us. The only requirement for attending Project SAFE is that the family has a child who is affected by pre-natal exposure to alcohol.

If you or a family you know would like to join us, contact Charisse Cossu-Kowalski at [Charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:Charisse@mcfares.org) or 586-329-6722.

Information about gatherings is also found on the Families and Supports Affected by FASD Yahoo group:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FaSAFASD/>

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

Scenario: Parents teaching 4 year old his alphabet.

Mom: "Repeat after me . . . S, T, U, V . . ."

4 year old son: "S, T, me, V . . ."

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## 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.

January 24, 2011	October 24, 2011
February 28, 2011	November 28, 2011
March 28, 2011	December (tbd), probably a luncheon meeting
April 25, 2011	
May 23, 2011	
June 27, 2011	
July 25, 2011	
August 22, 2011	
Sept. 26, 2011	

Visit MCFARES on the web at

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

and on Facebook at

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=93728110628&v=wall&ref=ts>

## Super Kids/Smart Choices Summer Socialization Program

We're happy to announce that the Super Kids/Smart Choices Summer Socialization program will run again this summer.

The program is tentatively scheduled for Monday through Thursday, July 18<sup>th</sup> through July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011. There will be a morning session and an afternoon session and will be held at a school in Macomb County. Students ages 5 through 15 who are on the fetal alcohol spectrum are invited to attend.

The program will assist students affected to



learn appropriate social skills. Each session will cover a different topic and give participants an opportunity to practice their newly-acquired skills.

The cost of the program is \$25 per student. Financial aid is available for those who need it.

For more information or to register for the program,

please contact Charisse at [Charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:Charisse@mcfares.org) or call 586-329-6722.

## MCFARES Lending Library Resources

MCFARES has recently been given some resources to add to its lending library.

The following VHS tapes are available:

Recovering Hope: Mothers Speak out about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (also available on DVD);  
Worth the Trip: Raising and Teaching Children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome;  
Students Like Me: Teaching Children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome; "A Happy, Healthy Baby";  
The National Teen Summit on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome; A Mother's Choice; The



Early Years; The School Years.

MCFARES also has a couple copies of a resource book called: Trying Differently: A Guide for Daily Living and Working with FASDs and Other Brain Differences.

If you would like to borrow any of these resources, please contact Charisse Cossu-Kowalski at [Charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:Charisse@mcfares.org) or call 586-329-6722.

## Rob Wybrecht Speaks at the First European Conference on FASD

Rob Wybrecht, the son of Ted and Barb and the first infant in the United States diagnosed with fetal alcohol syndrome, spoke at the First European Conference on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Rob shared his experiences growing up with fetal alcohol syndrome and talked about the gaps in services available to infants, children and adults who are on the fetal alcohol spectrum.



The conference was held at a beautiful 12th century abbey near Maastricht. Conference participants stayed at the beautiful abbey and enjoyed the comfortable, though spartan, accommodations.



While attending some other talks at the conference, Rob discovered that even though the other speakers spoke English, it was

sometimes difficult to understand their accents.

Researchers and medical clinicians from twenty-three countries attended the conference. Rob attended a session given by a psychiatrist from Ireland who stated that FASD is not accepted in Ireland and that the diagnosis has no meaning to professionals there.



Rob was surprised to find that alcohol was widely available in Europe. He found that alcohol was sold at McDonald's, in vending machines and at "rest stops" along the highway (to the left of the orange Fanta cans are tan cans of Buckler Pure Malt beer).

Rob works at the Arc of Kent County and continues to advocate at the local, state and national level to improve the lives of those who took their first drink before they took their first breath.

## The Fuel that Feeds My Fire

By Jan Crossen, Adoptive Mom/Author

It was mid-morning, April 14, 1989, in a maternity, surgery suite at the University Medical Center in Tucson, AZ, where a tiny male, child struggled for his first breaths of air. He entered the world early, after just 26 weeks gestation. Born premature, via a Cesarean Section, this fragile baby weighed just 2 pounds and 2 ounces. Born to a birth mother who drank alcohol during his pregnancy, his prognosis was "iffy." This tenacious, little fighter spent the next three months in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit battling for his life.

By age three, this small African American boy had entered the Arizona foster care system along with his older brother and younger sister. Removed by Child Protective Services from their birth parents' home, and unable to live safely in a placement with relatives, the siblings moved through several temporary foster homes, each child transferred with a single, black, garbage bag of personal belongings.

Flash forward to the present day. That small premature child is now my adopted son, Joshua. He is almost 22 years old, and he is the fuel that feeds the fire of my desire to tell the world about the tragedies of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

Inspired by the multiple struggles of my son, Josh, I vowed to raise awareness of FASD. In 2007, I wrote the *9 LIVES Trilogy*, a part fact, part fiction series about the adoption of a young, special needs child into the home of two loving and committed moms. These books won the **Gold Level Mom's Choice Award for a Young Adult Series**.



In November 2010, I created a 30 minute DVD titled, *"Birthdays Rock! A Presentation on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders."* This DVD is raising awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders while opening minds and dialogues to prevent teen alcohol use and adult alcohol use during pregnancy.

In the fall of 2010, I also completed two educational workbooks that are companion books to the *9 LIVES Trilogy*. They are the *9 LIVES: Learning Opportunity Guide, Teachers' and Students' Editions*.

By reading the series, and taking advantage of teachable moments and learning opportunities as they are presented in the books, students explore such themes as: alcohol, drugs, pregnancy, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, tolerance, diversity, bullying, special needs, foster care, adoption, love, respect, cultural heritage, family, traditions, sportsmanship, self-esteem, volunteerism, and community.

The *Learning Opportunity Guides* provide middle school teachers and home schooling parents with a variety of methodologies including: group discussions, independent study, partner and group projects, films, Internet searches, interviews, practicum experiences, physical activities, guest instructors, and community service

The *9 LIVES Trilogy, Learning Opportunity Guides, and "Birthdays Rock, A Presentation on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders"* DVD are available through the web site [www.jancrossen.com](http://www.jancrossen.com).

## **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.

#### **Livingston County**

FASD Living, Meets monthly on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday, 7 - 9 p.m., St. Joseph Mercy Livingston Hospital, cafeteria conference room, 620 Byron Road, Howell, MI 48843. Contact Terri Moore for more information, [fasdliving@comcast.net](mailto:fasdliving@comcast.net) or Family Resource Center at 517-548-2200.

### **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).

Parenting Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, Meets monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday, 7 – 9 p.m. Home of New Vision, 3800 Packard Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48108, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Room is located next to Suite 201 and is labeled “Private”. This group will provide parents and caregivers emotional support, FASD education, and community resources. The group will primarily focus on school-aged children. Contact Linda Rowse for more information, 734-668-8449, [Linda@washtenawfasd.com](mailto:Linda@washtenawfasd.com), [www.washtenaw.fasd.com](http://www.washtenaw.fasd.com)

### **Wayne County**

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Caregivers and Families Engaged, Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute, Wayne State University, Skillman Building, 100 East Palmer, Detroit, MI 48202. Contact Maureen Rashwan at 248-470-5469 for more information.

### **On-line Support**

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

## 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