



# FASD NEWS AND VIEWS

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



Established in 2003

## Questions We Are Asked:

*My daughter is 12 years old. A student in her grade passed out invitations to an end-of-school-year party and, you guessed it, my daughter was not invited. This was not the first and won't be the last time this happens. How do I prepare my daughter for disappointments?*

How do we explain to our children that some people haven't learned that it is bad manners to publically discuss events that have an exclusive guest list?

Work with your daughter to determine if the person who is hosting the party is a friend or an acquaintance; sometimes it's difficult for our children to understand the difference. Consider that there may have been other students who were also not invited (if all the other students were invited, then it might be a subject to discuss with your daughter's teacher).

The two of you can practice how to react

when this situation occurs again. What emotions was she feeling? How do we appropriately express those feelings?

Acknowledge that it is ok to feel sad, angry

and disappointed. It's ok to cry.

Help your daughter to plan a party and work with her through all the details. Remind her about how it was for her when she felt left out and how she might invite certain friends without others feeling left out. Role play how to handle these situations appropriately.

After the party, talk about

## SUMMER, 2011



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how things went: what she liked, how she felt, what she might do differently next time.

If you'd like to submit a question

## Super Kids/Smart Choices Summer Socialization Program

The Super Kids/Smart Choices summer socialization program will be run again this summer. It will be held on the following dates: July 18, 19, 20, 21 and 25, 26, 27 and 28.

Students learn and practice skills that they will use throughout their lives. They also develop friendships that last well beyond the last day of the program.

Affected children ages 5 through about 12 are welcome to attend the program that will be held in Macomb County.

For more information, contact Charisse at [Charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:Charisse@mcfares.org) or call 586-329-6722.



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

**Dad (quizzing 6.5 year old son who has FAS):** What is 1 + 2?

**Son (getting anxious and fidgety):** I don't know.

**Mom (taking another approach):** What number is Thomas (the train)?

**Son:** 1

**Mom:** What number is Edward (the train)?

**Son:** 2

**Dad:** How much are Thomas and Edward when you add them together?

**Son (counting on his fingers):** 3

### 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.

July 25, 2011  
August 22, 2011  
Sept. 26, 2011  
October 24, 2011  
November 28, 2011  
December (tbd), probably a luncheon meeting

January 23, 2012  
February 27, 2012  
March 26, 2012  
April 23, 2012  
May 21, 2012

Visit MCFARES on the web at

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

and on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/93728110628?ap=1>

## Learning Who Has to Change

By Charisse Cossu-Kowalski

Our path to parenting may have been a bit different than for most people as we had the opportunity to “pick” our kids but once we made the decision, we were sure we knew enough to parent two boys from Russia. How hard could it be?

Upon meeting our second oldest son (who at the time was 22 months old), we were sure that he had been prenatally exposed to alcohol. After all, I knew about these things because I was a social worker. But it was too late to turn back, we were in love with this little boy who had strawberry-blond hair and the sweetest voice and laugh we’d ever heard.

It’d be ok. I had read that paragraph on fetal alcohol syndrome in one of those books for one of those classes all those years ago. I met that guy in the hospital when I was working (the one everyone was afraid of and who, they said, would never leave the grounds). I’d make sure that my son would succeed and wouldn’t become a statistic. It’ll be just fine because I knew what I was doing.

But, it wasn’t that easy. The things we tried didn’t always work or didn’t work all the time or sometimes didn’t work for long. We muddled through doing the best we could. We found that our son’s symptoms and behaviors affected every part of his life and, therefore, affected every part of our lives. It was like we ALL had fetal alcohol syndrome (come to learn a bit down the road that our other son is also on the fetal alcohol spectrum and coupled with attachment issues, his challenges put a whole different spin on family dynamics).

Many years ago, we came across an article by Nathan Ory entitled “Who has to change? Trying their hardest, doing their best!”. (You can find it here:

<http://fasdconnections.ca/ory/Whohastochange.pdf>) . We saw in the pages of the article our sons. and then it hit us: It’s not them who has to change. It’s us. It’s our expectations. It’s our behaviors, thoughts, strategies. It’s not parenting by instinct; it’s purposeful, planned parenting. It’s thinking outside the box and developing new strategies. Doing what we’d always been doing would only get us what we’d always been getting.

One great example of changing strategies is how one of my son’s teachers changed her reward system to meet my son’s needs. The rest of the class used a checkbook system. They recorded the number of points they received and subtracted the number of points they lost. This concept was too abstract for my son and he needed more immediate feedback about his behaviors; he couldn’t wait til the end of the day to do the adding and subtracting. Numbers on a piece of paper meant nothing for him so his teacher implemented the “penny jar”. It was the same concept as the checkbook system but my son could see, feel and hear the pennies move from one side to the other. When he earned points (pennies) he moved pennies into his jar and when he lost points, he moved the pennies back to his teacher’s jar. Since this concept worked so well at school, we implemented the same program at home with our own set of target behaviors. Eventually, he outgrew the need for the penny jar and we moved on to something else. It had served its purpose and allowed him to grow and internalize expectations. It showed us the importance

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*Learning Who Has to Change**Continued from page 3*

of analyzing a behavior and trying to find the cause and work out an appropriate solution. Behaviors may not always be what they seem, though.

One of our sons had an affinity for paper clips. Yep, paper clips. He would find a way to get to the school office on a regular basis and ask for paper clips for his teacher. The clips never made it to the teacher and his fixation on paper clips was not discovered until the office asked the teacher why she needed so many paper clips. Some could name this behavior "stealing". He could be called a "liar". Or, we could look at the behavior as a symptom of his attachment challenges. He *needs* to collect things. He needs to have things to call his own. This need wasn't being met. At least not how he defined it. So, collecting things made him feel safe and cared for. He doesn't collect paper clips any more. We found that he felt safer if he had his own collection of things to call his own that he didn't have to share with anyone. So, while he needed it, he had his own box of "stuff" that was just for him.

What would you say about a 7 year old who would bark, gallop, break pencils, spit and kick? Is this child defiant? Is he violent? Or, is he telling adults the only way he knows how that he is overstimulated and overwhelmed? Our son did not have the vocabulary or the insight to know when he was overwhelmed. These behaviors were his only way of telling us that he needed a break. When he'd behave in this manner at school, he'd be sent to the office, a call home would be made and he was able to leave school to an environment that was less stimulating. When we were at large family gatherings and he was tired or hungry, he was more likely to become overstimulated. We learned to plan for these behaviors and made sure he was rested

and fed before going out. If he still became overstimulated, we found ways to give him a break (finding a quiet room, going for a ride or possibly leaving the event).

We do not excuse the behavior or allow it to continue rather we look at the reason behind the behavior and see if the need can be met in a more socially acceptable way. Stealing is always wrong but if he needs to have "stuff", we find a way to get him a supply that's only his that he has obtained in a legitimate manner. We must teach our kids effective coping skills because this learning does not come naturally for them. We must teach our children to recognize and name feelings, verbalize their needs and develop acceptable methods to meet their needs. It's an ongoing process and will change as our children grow and change.

It's like parenting any other child. But different. And we need to remain mindful of what our children need and how to meet those needs.

## News Worth Reading

The Michigan Coalition for Fetal Alcohol Resources Education and Support is happy to announce that it has received non-profit status and is now recognized as a charitable organization. If you'd like to make a tax deductible donation to MCFARES to help us in our mission to prevent FASD and to assist individuals and families affected by FASD, please contact Charisse at [Charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:Charisse@mcfares.org).

Melissa Sienkiewicz recently returned from a trip to Washington, D.C. to attend the NOFAS Affiliate Summit as the MCFARES representative. While in Washington, Melissa and her children met with legislators from the state of Michigan and helped educate them about the needs of those who are affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. She also had the opportunity to meet with NOFAS representatives and other affiliates from around the country. On the left is a picture of the NOFAS Affiliates who attended the summit. On the right is a picture of Melissa's children with Senator Tom Daschle.



Barb Parker was recently recognized for being an "Outstanding Volunteer" by the Macomb County Board of Commissioners for her work with MCFARES, Special Olympics and Trinity Lutheran Church. She received her award on June 23, 2011.

Thank you, Barb, for all you've done to serve our community.



# Save The Date

MCFARES FASDay event, 2011

Help us "Stomp Out FASD"

At a Dance-A-Thon

Saturday, September 17, 2011 at St. John Lutheran  
Church in Fraser

Contact Charisse at [Charisse@mcfares.org](mailto:Charisse@mcfares.org) for more  
information

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## Save the Date

FASDay in Grand Rapids

For more information contact:

Barb Wybrecht at [bmwybrecht@aol.com](mailto:bmwybrecht@aol.com)

Westminster Presbyterian is located at 47 Jefferson, Grand Rapids, MI 49503



JOHN McANDREW in Concert  
*Singer, Songwriter, Pianist*

Friday, September 9, 2011  
7:00 p.m.

Westminster Presbyterian Church Sanctuary  
Suggested donation: \$10/person, \$30/family

Remembering on the  
9<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup>  
month that Mothers  
and Fathers should  
abstain from alcohol  
during the 9 months  
of pregnancy

## 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> Thursday 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.

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### **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 quarterly. This group will

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provide parents and caregivers emotional support, FASD education, and community resources. The group will primarily focus on school-aged children. Contact Linda Rowse for meeting dates, 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