

# **FOSTERING STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE: Children, Families and Their Communities CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, WORKSHOPS, SPEAKERS**

## **Youth Panel - “Our Experience” - The Perspectives of Young Adults Who Were Formerly Placed in Foster Care**

Facilitated by Lori Ross, Executive Director, MFCAA

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### **Filling the Gap: Meeting Specialized Needs for LGBTQ Youth**

#### Workshop Summary:

On any given day, well over 260,000 children and youth nationally are in foster care or juvenile justice programs. It is estimated that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and youth who are questioning represent about 10% of this population. However, among the 14- 18 age groups it has been estimated that the actual number could be closer to 30%.

Many of these youth are in out-of-home care solely as a result of their LGBTQ identity, including those who have been rejected, neglected or abused. Many of these youth face hostility from their families of origin, from foster care and from the juvenile justice system. One survey of homeless LGBTQ youth reveals that almost 60% had been in foster care but ran away from their placements as a result of hostility toward their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Additionally, LGBTQ youth are fearful to report harassment or violence as often time agencies respond to these reports by moving the youth to another placement or isolating the youth rather than address the homophobia within their system. LGBTQ youth in out-of-home care frequently experience a disservice due to the lack of knowledge and sensitivity by the staff and professionals that they come in contact with. It is important to avoid the pathology of these youth or suggesting that they require special treatment. They need the same support services that all youth need.

Unfortunately, LGBTQ youth are over-represented in the foster care/juvenile justice system. They are more likely than other foster youth to be placed in residential programs. Yet, neither foster homes or residential care adequately address their emotional and mental health needs preferring instead to ignore, deny or refuse to serve these youth. Studies exploring safety of LGBTQ youth specifically cite schools, mental health agencies and foster care systems as unsafe for these youth.

This workshop is designed to address the myths and stereotypes of the LGBTQ culture, the frustrations that youth face who are “coming out” and how professionals working with these

youngsters can be more sensitive to these youth while providing quality services. Professionals should leave the workshop with a sense of rejuvenation after examining their own prejudices related to the culture.

Presenters:

Rick Williams, Program Coordinator, Ozanam Pathways

Walt Boulden, PhD, Executive Director, Research Development Institute

Presenter Professional Biography:

Rick Williams is the LGBTQ Resource Center Project Coordinator at Ozanam Pathways. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Bishop College, Dallas, Texas. He has 30 years of not-for-profit youth agency program administration experience. Prior to assuming his position at Pathways, he worked for Camp Fire USA at their corporate headquarters and at the Kansas City Council.

While at Camp Fire USA, he managed national youth programming and worked as HR assistant director. He also served as minority population recruiter and case manager for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Kansas City.

Dr. Walt Boulden is the Executive Director of the Resource Development Institute (RDI). His Ph.D. is in social work, and he received his MSW at the University of Denver. Prior to assuming his position at RDI, he served as Director of the UMKC School of Social Work. He has over fifteen years experience conducting workshops and making presentations on issues facing LGBTQ youth on local, regional and national levels. He has multiple publications on LGBT issues and recently agreed to serve as a reviewer for the Journal of Homosexuality.

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## **Precious Cargo Project**

According to the Missouri Department of Social Services, there were 6,527 reported incidents of child abuse or neglect involving 9,262 children statewide in 2004. Only about half of all incidents are reported.

Children are removed from the only home they have ever known. The child's only possessions are thrown into a **BLACK TRASH BAG**. The child can drag this **BLACK TRASH BAG** from place to place. If anything happens to the trash bag it is easily replaced with another.

We hope to raise enough funds and awareness within the Kansas City Metro to get these children their own suitcases to call their own. We feel that these children have been through enough; the least we can do is provide them with an ounce of dignity. The children will be provided their own suitcase in which their "precious cargo" can be placed. The children in the foster care system deserve at least that. The children have been robbed of a secure, permanent home through no fault of their own.

Presenters:

Betty Blackmon, MSW, JD, University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Social Work

April Beffer, UMKC Student

Ashley Andrews, UMKC Student  
Treby Blackshire, UMKC Student

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### **Working with Children, Caregivers and Communities When Sexually Reactive Behavior has Occurred**

Participants will leave this workshop with a better understanding of what causes sexually reactive behavior, what sexually reactive behavior is and how it differs from juvenile offending. Additionally, participants will be motivated to work with families where this behavior occurs in a more collaborative fashion. Basic facts about sexually reactive behavior will be presented about what it is and the prevalence. MOCSA has a program in place that addresses the concerns of caregivers where sexually reactive behaviors have occurred in addition to a program for children who have experienced sexually reactive behaviors and details of this program will be presented. Finally, a case will be made for working in a collaborative fashion within the community to decrease and eliminate these behaviors most effectively.

Presenters:

Rene McCreary, MS, LPC- Director of Clinical Services at MOCSA  
Kim Goering, LCSW- Senior Clinical Coordinator at MOCSA

Rene McCreary, MS, LPC- Director of Clinical Services at Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA). Rene has been working with families where sexually abusive behavior has occurred for approximately 25 years. Rene has worked with child and adolescent victims, adult survivors of sexual abuse, adolescent and adult sex offenders. In addition to providing direct services to families Rene has also provided workshops and supervision to thousands of caregivers, teachers, school administrators and therapists.

Kim Goering, LCSW- Senior Clinical Coordinator at MOCSA. Kim has experience working with adult survivors of sexual abuse, rape survivors and adult sex offenders. She is skilled at identifying, analyzing and working together with clients to navigate their way through the aftermath of sexual abuse and trauma.

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### **Bridging the Gap between Science, Community Partners, and Service/Foster Care Providers: An Overview of the University of Kansas SPARK Project**

Past research has suggested that children in foster care carry disproportionate risk for a number of negative mental health outcomes compared to typical children and children from community samples. Researchers, care providers, and policymakers alike have recognized the need for a scientific and systematic examination of factors that buffer against these negative mental health outcomes and promote adaptive functioning for children in care, despite their adverse life experiences. The SPARK project is one such federally-funded project, dedicated to the study of numerous individual and systemic factors that promote adaptive functioning of youth in care.

This presentation will provide information about the SPARK Project and the role that researchers can play in collaborating with multiple systems to better the lives of youth in care.

Presenter:

Yo Jackson, Ph. D., ABPP  
SPARK Project Primary Investigator  
University of Kansas

Dr. Jackson is an Assistant Professor in the Clinical Child Psychology Program at the University of Kansas. She is also the primary investigator of the SPARK Project at the University of Kansas. Dr. Jackson is the author of numerous scholarly articles, and her research interests focus on how exposure to child maltreatment impacts the development of adjustment. Additionally, she investigates the impact of physical and sexual abuse on the psycho-social development of foster youth. (Additional discussants may also include Mary Warren, M. A. (SPARK Project Coordinator) and/or Kalani Makanui, M. A. (SPARK Programming Hub Director).

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### **Missouri's Diligent Recruitment Grant: Securing permanency for older youth in 12-20 weeks**

The workshop shares information about Missouri's Adoption Opportunity Grant that is currently being implemented to study the effectiveness of Extreme Recruitment, an intensive, 12-20 week concurrent recruitment effort for youth in foster care. This workshop demonstrates how Extreme Recruitment can be replicated in any region by sharing lessons learned, case studies and practical tools. The Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition, a Saint Louis based recruitment and retention agency, developed Extreme Recruitment in partnership with the Missouri Children's Division, Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies and local private child welfare agencies. This innovative program challenges the business-as-usual approach in child welfare, and truly engages a multidisciplinary team of professionals to expedite permanency.

Presenter:

Sheila Suderwalla, MSW, Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition

Sheila Suderwalla, MSW joined the Coalition in 2003 and has achieved great success in securing permanency for teenagers in foster care. She recruits and supports adoptive families for teens. Sheila also facilitates a teen support group for program participants. In addition, Sheila coordinates a weekly televised adoption recruitment segment, "A Place to Call Home." In partnership with St. Louis' NBC affiliate KSDK NewsChannel 5 over 55% of the hardest to place children who have been featured on this Emmy winning program have found forever families. Ms. Suderwalla's work experience includes contracted case management for the State of Missouri, Family Development Specialist – training and licensing foster and adoptive parents and case management for abused and neglected children, including those born drug addicted and/or with HIV/AIDS. Ms. Suderwalla has extensive volunteer and advocacy experience, including mentoring at-risk teenagers. In addition to membership in professional organizations, Ms. Suderwalla serves as a board member for several local and national non-profit organizations.

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## **Teaching and Protecting versus Punishing and Forgiving**

Children currently in foster and adoptive placements struggle to have skill set(s) that many of us take for granted. Children born to us have a trust-base that provides them with an innate ability to more easily learn how to respond appropriately to everyday situations. Children in care and who are adopted often respond in ways that get them in trouble. They cannot make good choices when they are mad or worried, when they do not like what others say or do, or when they just plain do not want to do something (like follow a rule). This workshop will address ways to reduce resistance by using techniques that deescalate and lead children to personal accountability and partnership with adults who will help them develop a skill set to ensure success for a lifetime. Objectives of the session include:

- Punishment alone may stop a behavior but never change a behavior.
- Practice makes perfect: establishing success in small increments
- Protection is skill-based, not time-based
- Teaching and protecting provides lifetime impact

Presenter:

Linda Hosman, Ozanam BIST Consultant

Linda brings 9 years experience as an elementary classroom teacher, music teacher and daycare director. For 14 ½ years she has been a foster parent at all levels: traditional, medical, behavioral and career, as well as a Parent Trainer for STARS pre-service, in-service and Spaulding Adoption classes. Parent of 10 children, 6 of whom are adopted, Linda has parented children with a variety of diagnosis including bipolar, adhd, post-traumatic stress disorder, oppositional defiant disorder and reactive attachment disorder. Linda is currently in her sixth year as an educational/behavioral consultant with the Ozanam Behavior Intervention Support Team. Most recently, she has begun in-home consultation and training for behavioral and career foster parents in the northwest quadrant of Missouri via a state-awarded contract to Cornerstones of Care.

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## **When It's Safe To Tell: Family/System Responses To Support Children Disclosing Sexual Abuse**

Learn the processes by which children disclose sexual abuse & best ways for families to support children who are victims. Participants will learn what happens when children go through forensic interviewing at a child advocacy center & how multiple disciplines coordinate to investigate & prosecute these cases.

Presenters:

Beth Banker, MSW, LCSW, Child Protection Center

Nikki Fryer, MSW, Child Protection Center

Presenters: Beth Banker, MSW, LCSW, Clinical Director at the Child Protection Center, has worked in the field of child welfare for more than 27 years. She began her career investigating child abuse/neglect referrals. Later, she provided therapy services to children in residential care at Marillac, & worked with children & families dealing with abuse issues through outpatient programs at The Children's Place. In her current role at the Child Protection Center, she oversees the clinical work at the center where specially trained staff conduct forensic interviews & evaluations of approximately 750 children per year who are suspected of being victims of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, or witnesses to homicides. Beth also provides Extended Forensic Evaluations for some of the agency's youngest clients.

Nikki Fryer, MSW, Forensic Interviewer/Evaluator at the Child Protection Center, has over 16 years experience working with children and families. Her background includes working for Jackson County Children's Division in a variety of positions, including Alternative Care & out-based community social work. Nikki worked for the Bureau of Child Care with daycare regulations conducting investigations. She began her work at the Child Protection Center as a Victim Advocate providing education & support to non-offending parents and caretakers. Nikki currently conducts Forensic Interviews and Extended Forensic Evaluations of children & teens for the Child Protection Center.

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## **Regional, State and National Mandates for Post Adoption/Post Permanency Support Services**

As one of the fifteen (15) Community Champions Network sites (a program of the North American Council on Adoptable Children), Kansas City is a key player in setting the agenda for a mandate on post permanency support services and in identifying the needs and priorities of the community. This roundtable discussion is for parents, youth, child welfare professionals, mental health providers, community members and others to identify strengths, needs and opportunities, both locally and nationally. The input from this discussion will provide direction to the skills workshop on effective advocacy.

Presenter:

Kim Stevens, North American Council on Adoptable Children

Professional experience includes eight years with Massachusetts Families for Kids. Kim moved from part-time Family Advocacy Coordinator to Co-Director of MFFK. Kim established the Speak Out Team, a nationally recognized model for youth advocacy and awareness-raising. The seven founding members and staff were able to support and facilitate a Team that grew to more than 130 members. She also launched the Lifelong Families for Adolescents initiative with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services and assisted in successful advocacy for post-adoption services in Massachusetts.

Kim works at North American Council on Adoptable Children as project manager for the Jockey-funded Community Champions Network. CCN is working to support communities in

building advocacy coalitions to establish effective post adoption support services. Kim trains and consults on foster care, adoption and youth permanency with the MA Department of Social Services, the University of Massachusetts Center on Adoption Research, the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Services, the Dave Thomas Foundation among others.

She and her husband, Buddy have six children, four of whom were adopted from the public foster care system.

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### **Foster Parent Bill of Rights Training**

The goal of this training is to improve relationships between Children's Division Staff which includes front line staff, supervisors, SW Specialists, and Program Managers, and Foster/Adoptive Parents who will be the target audience for this training session. Each participant will receive a copy of the Foster Parent Bill of Rights, and will be assigned a portion of the Document, Chapter 210.566. In their small group they will read their portion and then present the information to the larger group. Since the Foster Parent Bill of Rights includes information regarding the NASW Code of Ethics, laws that affect placement decisions in order of preference, Placement Stability Staffings/Family Support Team Meetings this information will also be discussed. By the end of the training all parts of the Bill will have been presented, discussed, and processed so that both foster parents and CD staff understand the information contained in the bill.

Presenters:

Karla Russell, MSW, Children's Division  
Mary LeFebvre

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### **Using the Gift of Anger: Anger's Message as a Path to Healing**

Anger related behavior is always accomplishing something, although what it accomplishes may not be healthy or obvious.

Behind the anger feeling is a history of a wound, a hurt or a loss.

Anger related behavior is a distraction from the need that is not being met. In this workshop participants will be taught to interpret anger's message as an expression of need and use it creatively as a path for healing.

Presenters:

Jerry Medol, Anger Alternatives  
Rusty Fleischer, Anger Alternatives

Jerry Medol is an experienced educator and trainer in anger management. He is a sociologist and a nationally recognized expert in anger management training.

He is the creator of the Passive Assertive Framework©, Response Training© and the "Stoppit©" Program and a co-founder of the non-profit agency Anger Options. He works with men, women and children in his private practice, Anger Alternatives, based in the Kansas City Metropolitan area. He consults with batterer-intervention programs throughout the United States. He works with businesses as a consultant and trainer to address staff needs, workplace violence, supervisor sensitivity and organizational systemic dysfunction. Jerry conducts workshops with professionals to include anger management training in their practices and does onsite training and workshops for professional staff.

Rusty Fleischer is a career trainer and professional administrator who has worked in Israel and the U.S.. Her ability to communicate and interpret client needs and translate her awareness into program services has been great asset to her success. She is an experienced group facilitator and has directed and administered community based service programs for her entire career. Rusty joined Anger Alternatives in 2005 and is a co-founder of the non-profit agency Anger Options.

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## **Dialectic Behavior Therapy (DBT): How Can DBT Help Me?**

Perhaps you have been in a meeting where DBT was discussed as a mode of therapy to help with your client or child and found yourself wondering about DBT.

Dialectic Behavior Therapy (DBT) is an evidence-based practice that has been shown to decrease emotionality and intense behaviors. Because of the effective nature of this therapy, individuals working with children continue to hear about it.

In this workshop you will be familiar with the basic tenants and structure of DBT including mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness, and emotional regulation. You will learn how DBT can be useful for children to learn appropriate coping skills, increase emotional understanding and reduce emotionality including reduction in self-harming behavior. Learn about how DBT can be utilized in addition to or in conjunction with other types of therapies.

Presenter:

Peggy Chilson, LCSW, LSCSW, Ozanam Pathways

Peggy is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the states of Missouri and Kansas and has an MSW from the University of Kansas. Peggy has worked in a group practice in Kansas City providing therapy and workshops to many levels of people involved in the child welfare system.

Peggy uses current research proven techniques for the best results for the people she serves. Her therapy style is clear, comfortable with sensitivity to diversity and a dose of humor as well. Currently Peggy is employed at Ozanam Pathways where she is developing a Dialectical Behavior Therapy program. Additionally, Peggy maintains a private practice.

When not engaged with family and friends, Peggy enjoys nature as well as the performing arts.

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## **Improving Our Children's Lives Through Case and Class Advocacy**

Parents and professionals alike have an obligation to advocate on behalf of the children and youth in their families and on their caseloads. In this workshop, participants will learn the differences between case and class advocacy, the use of appreciative inquiry in both identifying direction and building consensus, engaging the media, setting priorities, messaging, and more.

Presenter:

Kim Stevens, North American Council on Adoptable Children

Professional experience includes eight years with Massachusetts Families for Kids. Kim moved from part-time Family Advocacy Coordinator to Co-Director of MFFK. Kim established the Speak Out Team, a nationally recognized model for youth advocacy and awareness-raising. The seven founding members and staff were able to support and facilitate a Team that grew to more than 130 members. She also launched the Lifelong Families for Adolescents initiative with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services and assisted in successful advocacy for post-adoption services in Massachusetts.

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She and her husband, Buddy have six children, four of whom were adopted from the public foster care system.

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## **Open Adoption in Real Life**

There are many misconceptions and there is a lot of confusion about open adoption. While it has been done for over 30 years, there is still a lot of anxiety about open adoption and many still question whether it is healthy or beneficial. Open adoption has many benefits for all members of the triad. Adopted people will never knock on the door of a stranger, who is their birth family. Adoptive parents will not worry about that eventual day, when their son or daughter seeks his birth family and worry about how it might affect their relationship. Birth parents will not spend a lifetime wondering about the child they gave up, how that impacted the child, live with guilt and keep a secret. We have had the pleasure and opportunity to learn first hand from our clients over the years, as well as from research and publications that open adoption is a very healthy option, even in difficult situations.

Hillary and Nancy would provide a brief presentation about open adoption and then ask the panel to share their real life stories of open adoption, leaving a bit of time for questions from the audience.

Presenters:

Nancy Simons Bean, MSW, LCSW, Adoption & Counseling Services for Families, Inc.

Hillary Merryfield, MSW, LCSW, Adoption Option

Hillary Merryfield is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the states of both Kansas and Missouri. Hillary has been in practice since 1980 and founded Adoption Option, Inc. in 1986. Adoption Option, Inc. is a not-for-profit licensed Child Placing Agency in the states of Missouri and Kansas. Prior to working in adoption, Hillary was an oncology and hospice social worker.

Nancy Bean is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the states of both Kansas and Missouri. Nancy has been in practice since 1974 and founded Adoption & Counseling Services for Families, Inc. in 1983. Adoption & Counseling Services for Families, Inc. is a not-for-profit licensed Child Placing Agency in the states of Missouri and Kansas. Prior to working in adoption, Nancy worked at the KU Med Center in Child Psychiatry and as a therapist at the Johnson County Mental Health Center, in addition to maintaining a private therapy practice.

Both Nancy and Hillary offer monthly Birth Parent Support groups through their agencies, which offer support to pregnant women and also those women who have made adoption plans for open adoption. Adoption Option has a big crowd at their annual open adoption potluck. Both Hillary and Nancy are committed to open adoption, as in most cases, it is the healthiest option available to all members of the triad.

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### **Missouri's adoption assistance program and the federal adoption tax credit**

In this session, you will learn the basics of adoption assistance for children adopted from foster care system. Topics include eligibility, benefits, taxes, and more. Participants will receive state specific information and will come away with concrete information and strategies to better advocate for foster and adopted children with special needs. There will also be an overview of the Federal Adoption Tax Credit.

Presenter:

Josh Kroll, North American Council on Adoptable Children

Josh is the Project Coordinator of the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center, a program of the North American Council on Adoptable Children. He has worked at NACAC for 12 years, 9 years as a program assistant to the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center and 1 year as Project Coordinator. In his 10 years working with the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center he gained an extensive knowledge of federal and state laws and policies that he draws upon to answer thousands of inquiries from parents, workers, and administrators.

In addition to his work with the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center, he has supported NACAC's parent group work. He has also written NACAC's federal adoption tax credit fact sheets.

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### **Family Group Conferencing – A Stakeholders' Forum for Wise Decision-making**

CMC staff will present the concepts of Family Group Conferencing and then facilitate a discussion among workshop participants about the process, seeking feedback and ideas about implementing this approach in the systems of conference attendees.

Presenters:

Diane Kyser, Community Mediation Center

Diane Kyser is the Executive Director of the Community Mediation Center (CMC) in Independence, Missouri. Begun in 1999 CMC serves the citizens of the Kansas City metropolitan area and the surrounding Counties through conflict resolution training, facilitation, consultation and mediation services. This is the second grassroots, community-based dispute resolution service Diane has started. After establishing the mediation center in Davenport, Iowa and serving as its Executive Director for nine years, her husband's job brought them to Independence, Missouri. Diane guides an eight person staff and 15 volunteer mediators, mediates an average of 100 cases a year and provides training for businesses, organizations, schools, and churches. Her most recent projects have involved instituting Circle processes in prisons and comprehensive restorative justice programs in schools.

Diane has a Master's Degree in education from Indiana University and a Master's Degree in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University where Howard Zehr was her advisor. Diane's husband, Bob, has served in full time ministry for the Community of Christ for 33 years. They have two married sons and two delightful grandsons, all living in the Kansas City area.

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### **Child Welfare Trends: Keys to Reunification**

Trends in the child welfare population demographics for a two-year period will be examined which include children's age, gender, race, placement, and reason for entering the child welfare system. Obtaining an understanding of the population with which child welfare professionals work is vital to developing permanency planning strategies for children; specifically reunification.

Keys which will be discussed regarding reunification include professional's values as they pertain to a family's ability to change to meet their child's needs, and overall support of the reunification goal. Additional topic explored during the workshop include family engagement; team cohesiveness, trust and respect; family contact; community supports; case manager involvement; targeted service provision.

Strategies to be discussed include philosophical changes in practice, work with community resources, additional training needs and quality assurance initiatives.

Presenters:

Lesa Chandler, Cornerstones of Care

Janet Braker, Cornerstones of Care

Lesa A. Chandler has 30 years of experience working with children and families in a variety of settings. For the last 5 years, she has worked in the areas of Training & Program Administration for Cornerstones of Care's Foster Care & Adoption programs. She has been a foster parent, trained therapeutic foster parents and staff for Maryhurst in Louisville, Kentucky, served on committees to help implement Family2Family in Jefferson County, Kentucky, and provided contract training in a variety of settings.

Janet Braker has over 17 years of experience with working in the Child Welfare community. For 16 years she worked for the Missouri Children's Division in Jackson County in a variety of positions; mostly completing quality assurance and improvement initiatives in the role of Quality Assurance Administrator. Ms. Braker now works for Cornerstones of Care as the Director of Quality Assurance and Utilization Management where she oversees the outcomes management systems and programs to support a system-wide evaluative and quality improvement processes.

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### **Understanding the Sibling Bond: What it is and What it isn't**

Separating siblings in foster care or through adoption adds to children's emotional loss and trauma. Studies have shown that even babies experience depression when separated from their brothers and sisters. Children who have lived together in families with trauma often have an even stronger bond and connection, as it has been through these ties that they have survived their less than optimal or abusive family life. Yet, the sibling bond and the research surrounding this bond, is very often misunderstood. This presentation will cover understanding the significance of the sibling bond, assessing the sibling bond, and help professionals in understanding appropriate placement recommendations.

Presenter:

Susan Peach, Lifeworks Family Treatment Group

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### **Neurobiology of Attachment**

This session will present an overview of the neurobiology of the effects of early trauma and maltreatment, often resulting in a diagnosis of Reactive Attachment Disorder. Additionally, there will be a focus on how understanding and treatment of attachment and trauma based issues has evolved over the past two decades and the myths associated with this therapy.

Presenter:  
Susan Peach, Lifeworks Family Treatment Group

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### **The Missing Links: How to Engage Fathers and Revitalize Couple Relationships**

While child centered best practices define policy and decision making, less emphasis has traditionally been placed upon how the engagement of fathers and strengthening and supporting of healthy couple relationships can better these best practices. Yet, without these key pieces, the positive outcomes that are desired for children may not occur or last over time. Parent-child relationship quality and child behaviors are improved more by Couples Education than by Parent Education alone. Why is it that when these natural supports are in place to support a child we still struggle to fully engage them? Reunification and child placement often centers on what is best for the child and how to meet the child's needs, but fails to address how father involvement and the couple relationship affects the child's world. If these supports are not addressed in reunification plans or in foster homes, the system of care may not reach its potential. In this workshop, we will uncover the distinctions in working with fathers and parent couples, whether biological/foster/or adoptive, and enhance the participants ability to engage and support these natural, vital links.

Presenters:  
Amy Sielaff, M.S. MFT, Healthy Families Counseling and Support  
Aaron Shore, M.S. Counseling Psychology, Healthy Families Counseling and Support

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### **The Life of a Children's Division Worker**

The Jackson County Children's Division has approximately 200 front line workers providing services to children and families who are impacted by child abuse and neglect. Workers are assigned to program areas and each program area fills a specified role within the Division. Through the panel presentation, audience members will hear directly from front line staff as they explain their functions and share what life is really like as a Division employee. Staff assigned to investigations, family centered services, alternative care, adoptions and licensing will share their experiences. Each position is uniquely designed to address a different realm of the public child welfare system and each has its own rewards and challenges. At the end of the presentation, panel members will take questions from the audience.

Presenter:  
Virginia Fatseas, Jackson County Children's Division

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### **John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, Transitioning out of Foster Care**

Making the transition from childhood to adulthood is a gradual and complicated process made easier by the support of families and communities. For youth in out of home care in Missouri, this transition presents specific challenges that come from the disruption of natural family support systems. While these challenges are regularly met and overcome by individual youth, research shows overwhelmingly poorer outcomes for these young adults as they move into independent adulthood. The John H Chafee Foster Care Independence Program was established to help young people prepare for and make the transition from adolescence to adulthood, learn about and access available resources in the community, prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions, and make positive connections in the community.

Presenters:

Karen Candie, Children's Divison

Archie Williams, LINC Chafee Independent Living Program

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### **Fostering Growth in the Child with Failure to Thrive**

This session will provide individuals working directly with children an array of strategies and techniques to enhance their skills in care giving and developing support for children with FTT by providing an understanding of the diagnosis of FTT and how it is treated.

Presenters:

Kathe Kraly, RN, MSN, CPNP, Children's Mercy Hospital

Katie Yeldell, RN, MSN, FNP, Children's Mercy Hospital

Ms. Kraly and Ms. Yeldell are experienced nurse practitioners who have worked as members of the Children's Mercy multidisciplinary team that evaluates and treats children diagnosed with FTT in the Ready, Set, Grow clinic. Ms. Kraly started the Ready, Set, Grow clinic in 2002 within the CARE clinic where children are assessed for child abuse and neglect.

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### **Family/System Forum – Conference Overview**

This session will be a forum intended to culminate the knowledge and ideas that were exchanged throughout the two days of this conference. All conference presenters and participants are invited to be a part of this learning experience that gathers together parents and professionals in a way that will bring about better integration, innovation and collaboration with the goal of best serving children and families.

Facilitated by:

Rosalyn Bertram, Ph.D – UMKC School of Social Work

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## **Launching Adult Children**

Parenting skills over the generations have obviously had an effect on the independence that is promoted in young adults and consequently influences launching of young adults as successful members of today's society. This lecture/discussion will explore some historical perspectives in reference to differences in the independence of young adults over the years, as well as parenting skills that may or may not assist in the successful integration of young adults as successful members of society. Some cross-cultural issues will also be explored regarding social isolation and issues in this country and some other countries that can affect successful launching of adult children.

Presenter:

Maureen D. Patton, L.M.F.T., L.C.M.F.T., L.C.S.W., L.L.C.

Maureen has been in private practice for over 25 years practicing as a licensed marriage and family therapist and a licensed clinical social worker. Additionally, she is a clinical member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. She has provided training and instruction at the college and university level for both graduate and undergraduate students as well as training for various groups, including attorneys and therapists. She is also a mediator in reference to child custody issues. Private practice specialties include child abuse, child neglect and sexual abuse as well as working with a variety of clientele, including family members of all ages. Her practice includes a therapeutic/systemic approach. She is a Diplomate with the American College of Forensic Counselors. She has served as an Ambassador to China in reference to marriage and family therapy.

Maureen previously has been a social service worker for the state agency as well as a foster parent and adoptive parent.

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## **Racial Awareness: Disproportionality and Disparity in Child Welfare**

The Racial Awareness workshop will focus on unpacking the definition of "race" and its implications in society, including foster care. A video documentary will be used to show that race does not have a genetic marker. There is no genetic code that identifies each race. Therefore, we now see that race is a social construct, not predestination based on biology. It simply is not true that Asians are genetically predestined for music and math, that blacks are genetically blessed for athletic excellence, or that whites just have the right genes for governance. In fact, this workshop will demonstrate the role prejudice has played throughout history to reinforce itself. With an understanding of how the playing fields of society became unequal, we can then discuss ways this has affected the racial disparity in foster care and ways to promote a more equitable society.

Presenters:

Heidi Elmore

Case Management Supervisor  
Cornerstones of Care

Heidi Elmore is a Case Management Supervisor for Cornerstones of Care (COC). Before her last two years of service with COC, Ms. Elmore was engaged in several cross-cultural endeavors such as teaching English in Germany to students from 6 countries, assessing a post-tsunami project in Sri Lanka, and living with a group of orphans in Zambia in order to develop a system of care for them. Ms. Elmore left her home in culturally and racially diverse Southern California to obtain her Bachelors of Psychology from MidAmerica Nazarene University and her Masters of Development from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

Tanisha Bronston  
Foster Care Manager  
Family Advocates-Crittenton

Tanisha Bronston is the current Program Manager for the Foster Care Department at Family Advocates, LLC-Crittenton Children's Center. She has served in this position for the last year and has five years previous experience working for the Children's Division in the Alternative Care Department. She has her Master of Science in Counseling Psychology.

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### **Constitutional Law and Child Protection**

This workshop will provide information on the protections in our constitution that exist for families who interact with the Child Welfare System. Taught by an expert in the field who works primarily to defend the rights of parents to privately home-school their children, this workshop will focus on what kind of government intervention is or isn't allowed within your home and family when child abuse or neglect is suspected. Along with information on constitutional rights, the issue of the privilege of licensure will be discussed so that participants will understand the possible conflict between their constitutional rights and their desire to keep or maintain a foster home license.

Presenter:  
Scott Woodruff, Attorney, Home School Legal Defense Association, Washington, DC.

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### **4 Session Track: Medically Fragile Children in Foster Care**

This track of 4 workshop sessions will focus on successful strategies for working with foster children who have unique medical needs. Sessions will be presented by medical professionals with expertise in the field. Individuals can participate in 1 or more of the sessions from this

specialized track. Target audience includes: foster/adoptive parents, child welfare staff, and administrators.

## **CONFERENCE SPEAKERS**

- **Rita L Soronen**, Executive Director, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
- **Steve Roling**, President/CEO, Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City