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April 2009

National Foster Parent Association (NFPA; nfpaonline.org) is a nonprofit, volunteer organization established in 1972 as a result of the concerns of several independent groups that felt the United States needed a national organization to meet the needs of foster families. In August 1971, the Child Welfare League of America received a 3-year grant to establish a national organization for foster parents. The League immediately established a foster parent project to begin creating the organization. Today, NFPA has grown from an original group of 926 foster parents, 210 social workers, and 59 other professionals to an organization that represents hundreds of thousands of foster families nationwide through foster parent affiliates.

Rachel Greene Baldino, MSW, LCSW, writes a relationship column for the health and wellness website SixWise.com. She is the author of the ebook Loving Simply: Eliminating Drama from Your Intimate Relationships.

To order "Success as a Foster Parent"
visit www.NFPAonline.org or call (253) 683-4246

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MISSION STATEMENT

To support foster parents in achieving safety, permanence, and well-being for children and youth is care.

The National Advocate is an official publication of the National Foster Parent Association
I am pleased to report to you that all the committees of the NFPA are working very hard this year to achieve the objectives laid out in the NFPA’s Strategic Plan. I would like to highlight two longstanding committees and two new committees that will help lead NFPA into the future.

Conference Committee

Sharon Carlson of Georgia is chairing this committee and is expanding its reach by adding sub-committees dealing with specific areas including; registration, workshops, vendors, logistics, special events and social events. These sub-committees are working on their specific areas of interest so that our 40th Education Conference, to be held in Baltimore, Maryland will be the best Conference ever. The Conference Committee includes a member of the Maryland Foster Parent Association on each of the sub-committees. In doing this we can make sure we take full advantage of all that Baltimore and Maryland has to offer. We are very excited about the partnership that has been formed between the MFPA and the NFPA. There are some very exciting activities being planned for this conference; new speakers, time to renew friendships and make new ones, time to explore the real Baltimore (more than the “normal” tourist sees) and much more. Mark your calendar for this fantastic conference, scheduled for May 29 through June 2, 2010 at the Marriott Hotel Waterfront.

Budget & Finance Committee

Sue Dondiego has had the challenging task of dealing with the Budget & Finance side of the house this year and she has managed, along with her committee and the Treasurer, Duane St. Clair, to control ebb and flow of finances within NFPA. Two of the important things the committee has done are; to revamp the Finance Manual, the guidebook for operating our non-profit corporation and to conduct regular, monthly Budget & Finance Committee meetings to monitor and modify the budget as was necessary. This committee does the behind the scenes work to make sure we live within our means.

Partnerships & Collaboration Committee

This is one of our new committees and is chaired by Dr. Eileen Pasztor. It was formed this year and they are presently examining existing relationships and what opportunities exist to develop new partnerships with other national organizations and how we can
collaborate effectively and efficiently with them on projects and activities that benefit both partners. It is the committee’s intention to re-establish, strengthen and establish relationships that will, in the end, will benefit foster parents and the children in our care.

**Products & Services Committee**

During our 39th Education Conference in Reno, NV our members were given the opportunity to voice their opinions on the need to look at products and services that could financially and otherwise benefit the members of the NFPA. After the conference a survey was sent to all the members of a broad range of products and services that the committee felt could be of benefit to each member. From the conference questionnaire and the survey Irene Clements chairman of the committee was able to develop a list of products and services that they will be reviewing, over the next several months, and finding the “best of brand” products and services to offer to you, our members. We are all aware that our members are never fully reimbursed for the time, energy, or money they expend on the care of the children they are responsible for and whatever (NFPA) can do to reduce the financial burden our members incur we are eager to do. (See page 18)
Tax Benefits for Foster Caregivers...  
The benefits are there if you know where to find them

The National Foster Parent Association is pleased to present the 2008 Tax Benefits for Foster, Adoptive Parents and Kinship Caregivers. This resource guide provides you with valuable information worth several thousand dollars or more in tax benefits. To view this guide, visit www.NFPAonline.org

IRS Reminds Taxpayers to Take Advantage of Recovery Act
BY CHRISTIN L. KUNDERT, NFPA STAFF

Internal Revenue Service  
Summertime Tax Tips—July 21, 2009

The National Foster Parent Association, in collaboration with the Washington State Society of Enrolled Agents and the Internal Revenue Service, continue to provide programs, trainings and information to support foster parents with tax issues. With 2009 now half over, the Internal Revenue Service reminds taxpayers to take advantage of the numerous tax breaks made available earlier this year in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The recovery law provides tax incentives for first-time homebuyers, people purchasing new cars, those interested in making their homes more energy efficient and parents and students paying for college. However, all of these incentives have expiration dates so taxpayers should take advantage of them while they can.

First-Time Homebuyer Credit
The Recovery Act extended and expanded the first-time homebuyer tax credit for 2009.

Taxpayers who didn’t own a principal residence during the past three years and purchase a home this year before Dec. 1 can receive a credit of up to $8,000 on either an original or amended 2008 tax return, or a 2009 return. However, the purchase must close before Dec. 1, 2009, and an eligible taxpayer cannot claim the credit until after the closing date. This credit phases out at higher income levels, and different rules apply to home purchases made in 2008.
New Vehicle Purchase Incentive

ARRA also provides a tax break to taxpayers who make qualified new vehicle purchases after Feb. 16, 2009, and before Jan. 1, 2010.

Qualifying taxpayers can deduct the state and local sales and excise taxes paid on the purchase of new cars, light trucks, motor homes and motorcycles. There is no limit on the number of vehicles that may be purchased, and you may claim the deduction for taxes paid on multiple purchases. But the deduction per vehicle is limited to the tax on up to $49,500 of the purchase price of each qualifying vehicle and phases out for taxpayers at higher income levels. This deduction is available regardless of whether a taxpayer itemizes deductions on Schedule A.

Energy-Efficient Home Improvements

The Recovery Act also encourages homeowners to make their homes more energy efficient. The credit for non-business energy property is increased for homeowners who make qualified energy-efficient improvements to existing homes. The law increases the rate to 30 percent of the cost of all qualifying improvements and raises the maximum credit limit to a total of $1,500 for improvements placed in service in 2009 and 2010.

Qualifying improvements include the addition of insulation, energy-efficient exterior windows and energy-efficient heating and air conditioning systems.

Tax Credit for First Four Years of College

The American opportunity credit is designed to help parents and students pay part of the cost of the first four years of college. The new credit modifies the existing Hope credit for tax years 2009 and 2010, making it available to a broader range of taxpayers, including many with higher incomes and those who owe no tax. Tuition, related fees, books and other required course materials generally qualify. Many of those eligible will qualify for the maximum annual credit of $2,500 per student.

Certain Computer Technology Purchases Allowed for 529 Plans

ARRA adds computer technology to the list of college expenses (tuition, books, etc.) that can be paid for by a qualified tuition program (QTP), commonly referred to as a 529 plan. For 2009 and 2010, the law expands the definition of qualified higher education expenses to include expenses for computer technology and equipment or Internet access and related services to be used by the designated beneficiary of the QTP while enrolled at an eligible educational institution. Software designed for sports, games or hobbies does not qualify, unless it is predominantly educational in nature.

Five Tax Facts about Summertime Child Care Expenses

Many parents who work or are looking for work must arrange for care of their children under 13 years of age during the school vacation.

Here are five facts the IRS wants you to know about a tax credit available for childcare expenses. The Child and Dependent Care Credit is available for expenses incurred during the lazy hazy days of summer and throughout the rest of the year.

- The cost of day camp can count as an expense towards the child and dependent care credit.
- Expenses for overnight camps do not qualify.
- If your childcare provider is a sitter at your home or a daycare facility outside the home, you will get some tax benefit if you qualify for the credit.
- The actual credit can be up to 35 percent of your qualifying expenses, depending upon your income.

You may use up to $3,000 of the un-reimbursed expenses paid in a year for one qualifying individual or $6,000 for two or more qualifying individuals to figure the credit.

For more information, including rules for claiming this credit for your spouse or a dependent age 13 or over who is not able to care for himself or herself, check out IRS Publication 503, Child and Dependent Care Expenses. This publication is available on the IRS Web site, www.IRS.gov or by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

IRS Publication 503, Child and Dependent Care Expenses (PDF)
Making Work Pay and Withholding

The Making Work Pay Credit lowered tax withholding rates this year for 120 million American households. However, particular taxpayers who fall into any of the following groups should review their tax withholding rates to ensure enough tax is withheld, including multiple jobholders, families in which both spouses work, workers who can be claimed as dependents by other taxpayers and pensioners. Failure to adjust your withholding could result in potentially smaller refunds or in limited instances may cause you to owe tax rather than receive a refund next year. So far, in 2009, the average refund amount is $2,675, and 79 percent of all returns received a refund.

Seven Tips for Students with a Summer Job

Many students get a summer job during their time off from school. Here are the top seven things the IRS wants everyone to know about income earned while working a summer job.

- Taxpayers fill out a W-4 when starting a new job. This form is used by employers to determine the amount of tax that will be withheld from your paycheck. Taxpayers with multiple summer jobs will want to make sure all their employers are withholding an adequate amount of taxes to cover their total income tax liability. To make sure your withholding is correct; visit the Withholding Calculator on IRS.gov.
- Whether you are working as a waiter or a camp counselor, you may receive tips as part of your summer income. All tip income you receive is taxable income and is therefore subject to federal income tax.
- Many students do odd jobs over the summer to make extra cash. Earnings you received from self-employment are subject to income tax. These earnings include income from odd jobs like baby-sitting and lawn mowing.
- If you have net earnings of $400 or more from self-employment, you will also have to pay self-employment tax. This tax pays for your benefits under the Social Security system. Social Security and Medicare benefits are available to individuals who are self-employed the same as they are to wage earners who have Social Security tax and Medicare tax withheld from their wages. The self-employment tax is figured on Form 1040, Schedule SE.
- Subsistence allowances paid to ROTC students participating in advanced training are not taxable. However, active duty pay – such as pay received during summer advanced camp – is taxable.
- Special rules apply to services you perform as a newspaper carrier or distributor. You are a direct seller and treated as self-employed for federal tax purposes if you meet the following conditions: You are in the business of delivering newspapers. All your pay for these services directly relates to sales rather than to the number of hours worked. You perform the delivery services under a written contract that states that you will not be treated as an employee for federal tax purposes.
- Generally, newspaper carriers or distributors under age 18 are not subject to self-employment tax.

IRS Withholding Calculator Form 1040 Schedule SE

Tax Benefits for Job Seekers

Many taxpayers spend time during the summer months polishing their résumé and attending career fairs. If you are searching for a job this summer, you may be able to deduct some of your expenses on your tax return.

- In order to deduct job search costs, the expenses must be spent on a job search in your current occupation. You may not deduct expenses incurred while looking for a job in a new occupation.
- You can deduct employment and outplacement agency fees you pay while looking for a job in your present occupation. If your employer pays you back in a later year for these fees, you must include the amount you receive in your gross income up to the amount of your tax benefit in the earlier year.
- You can deduct amounts you spend for preparing and mailing copies of a résumé to prospective employers.
as long as you are looking for a new job in your present occupation.

- If you travel to an area to look for a new job in your present occupation, you may be able to deduct travel expenses to and from the area. You can only deduct the travel expenses if the trip is primarily to look for a new job. The amount of time you spend on personal activity compared to the amount of time you spend looking for work is important in determining whether the trip is primarily personal or is primarily to look for a new job.

- You cannot deduct job search expenses if there was a substantial break between the end of your last job and the time you begin looking for a new one.

- You cannot deduct job search expenses if you are looking for a job for the first time.

For more information about job search expenses, see IRS Publication 529, Miscellaneous Deductions.

Top Seven Tips for Taxpayers Starting a New Business

Anyone starting a new business this summer should be aware of their federal tax responsibilities. Here are the top seven things the IRS wants you to know if you plan on opening a new business this year.

- First, you must decide what type of business entity you are going to establish. The type your business takes will determine which tax form you have to file. The most common types of business are the sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation and S corporation.

- The type of business you operate determines what taxes you must pay and how you pay them. The four general types of business taxes are income tax, self-employment tax, employment tax and excise tax.

- An Employer Identification Number is used to identify a business entity. Generally, businesses need an EIN. Visit IRS.gov for more information about whether you will need an EIN. You can also apply for an EIN online at IRS.gov.

- Good records will help you ensure successful operation of your new business. You may choose any recordkeeping system suited to your business that clearly shows your income and expenses. Except in a few cases, the law does not require any special kind of records. However, the business you are in affects the type of records you need to keep for federal tax purposes.

- Every business taxpayer must figure taxable income on an annual accounting period called a tax year. The calendar year and the fiscal year are the most common tax years used.

- Each taxpayer must also use a consistent accounting method, which is a set of rules for determining when to report income and expenses. The most commonly used accounting methods are the cash method and an accrual method. Under the cash method, you generally report income in the tax year you receive it and deduct expenses in the tax year you pay them. Under an accrual method, you generally report income in the tax year you earn it and deduct expenses in the tax year you incur them.

- Visit the Business section of IRS.gov for resources to assist entrepreneurs with starting and operating a new business.

Starting A Business Operating A Business Closing A Business Publication 4591

For more information: contact the National Foster Parent Assoc. www.NFPAonline.org or (253) 683-4246 * Internal Revenue Service www.IRS.gov or (800) 829-1040 * Washington State Society of Enrolled Agents www.wssea.org or (800) 613-2801.
Six projects account for most of the tricky assignments our kids face at school. Understanding the learning goals and the specific challenges each one poses will help parents and children alike find the best solutions.

**Baby Picture**
- **Assignment:** Bring in a baby picture. The photos are often posted anonymously and classmates are asked to guess who's who, or may be used in yearbooks or graduation presentations.
- **Grade level:** Preschool to kindergarten, junior high and high school graduations.
- **Learning goal:** To help students get to know one another to salute graduates.
- **Why it's challenging:** Children adopted at an older age may not have baby pictures, the identities of children who stand out because of race or physical differences are easy to guess.
- **Alternatives for teachers:** Have children bring in pictures from when they were "younger," or draw pictures of themselves as babies.
- **Approaches for parents:** Let your child know that you wish you had photos, too, and say that you're sure she was a beautiful baby. Encourage her to draw a picture of herself.
- **How one family handled it:** "My son was asked to bring a baby photo for his elementary school graduation. I wrote a letter to the teachers and included articles from AF. The team leader acknowledged that they'd just always done it this way. In future years, they'll ask for photos of the children 'at a younger age.'" — Debbie Schwartz

**Family Tree**
- **Assignment:** Draw a family tree — either as a literal tree, with branches, or in diagram form — showing family relationships.
- **Grade level:** Elementary school.
- **Learning goal:** To illustrate family relationships.
- **Why it's challenging:** The format may not accommodate birth and adoptive relatives, or otherwise non-traditional family makeups.
- **Alternatives for teachers:** Offer formats that show roots as well as branches; instead of a tree, have students create a family forest or a neighborhood of family houses.
- **Approaches for parents:** Allow your child to choose which family or families to portray, or encourage him to design his own format.

To see examples of inclusive trees, click on "A Forest of Family Trees" at adoptivefamilies.com/school.

**What Role Should Parents Play?**

Our instinct will always be to step in, but, as our kids grow, we need to learn to scale back our involvement.

- **Preschool and early elementary:** Offer to talk with the teacher, alone or with your child, and to accompany your child to school when she's Star of the Week. At this age, children may welcome a parent's presence in the classroom and like the idea of an adoption presentation.
- **Later elementary:** An eight- or nine-year-old may not want his mom to come with him to school, but will probably still appreciate your offer to talk with the teacher to involve your child in the conversation and let him make the final decision about how he'll complete the assignment.
- **Middle and high school:** During the middle-school years, parents should still provide behind-the-scenes support. Act as a sounding board as she decides what to do, then role-play conversations to have with the teacher so she can practice explaining why an assignment is difficult.
Well it’s time to think about school starting… again. Children in foster care have all the usual worries of any child, “will I fit in”, and “will I like my teacher or they like me?”

Unlike the typical student, children in foster care tend to be:
- Absent from school more frequently.
- Less likely to read and perform other academic tasks at grade level.
- More likely to engage in inappropriate behaviors at school.
- Less likely to enroll in college upon graduation from high school.
- How do we as foster parents support, advocate and encourage the children in our care?

*(Vera Institute of Justice, 2002. pg.2)*

Several positive and helpful resources for the process of working with the school systems are available. First we need to make school a top priority in our children’s lives, by modeling a positive approach to school relationships.

The old saying is true “It takes a village to raise a child” and children in care are more likely to succeed if all the adults and systems are working as a team. As the foster parent we are the facilitators and the positive contact needed for the village to work for the best interest of the child.

In the new book from the National Foster Parent Association, *Success as a Foster Parent*, it explains the importance of becoming involved in the child’s school for the benefit of the children in care.

- Meet with the child’s teachers and administrators early in the year.
- Explain to school (with the approval of the child’s casework) your responsibility for signing all permission slips, report cards and other paperwork, including approval to participate in sports and other school activities.
- Attend all parent-teacher conferences, and schedule extra parent-teacher conference as needed.
- Pay close attention to report cards and comments teachers on written assignments.
- If you have a question about a specific grade or comment, follow up by calling, e-mailing, or scheduling a meeting with the teacher.

Consistently send the children in your care the following messages: school matters; homework is important; you enjoy helping them succeed in school; and education is the key to success as an adult.

Above all, keep the lines of communication open and continuous. Strong communication between foster parents and all those involved in the child’s education is critical to academic success (pg. 104-105).

Tools to Increase Positive Communication

To help with the teacher conference, the publication of the Vera Institute of Justice (2002), *Foster Children & Education*, has several handouts, in English and Spanish; *7 Questions to ask at Parent-Teacher Conferences*, and *How to help your Child with Homework*.

Many children who enter foster care have educational delays that may need the services of Special Education. Every child who receives Special Education services will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) developed by the educational team and “parent” at least once a year.

To become a proactive member of this team, a user friendly timeline and worksheet has been developed by the National Center For Learning Disabilities, called the *IEP Meeting Planner*.

This planner helps you as the parent to understand the best questions to ask, the information that needs to be gathered and a guided timeline of the general IEP process.

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**Adolescence is a period of rapid changes. Between the ages of 12 and 17, for example, a parent ages as much as 20 years.**

~Author Unknown
What Advocates Do by Pamela Wright, MA, MSW

Advocacy is not a mystery

Gather Information
Advocates gather facts and information. As they gather information and organize documents, they learn about the child’s disability and educational history. Advocates use facts and independent documentation to resolve disagreements and disputes with the school.

Learn the Rules of the Game
Advocates educate themselves about their local school district. They know how decisions are made and by whom. Advocates know about legal rights. They know that a child with a disability is entitled to an “appropriate” education, not the “best” education, nor an education that “maximizes the child’s potential.” They understand that “best” is a four-letter word that cannot be used by parents or advocates.

Advocates know the procedures that parents must follow to protect their rights and the child’s rights.

Plan and Prepare
Advocates know that planning prevents problems. Advocates do not expect school personnel to tell them about rights and responsibilities. Advocates read special education laws, regulations, and cases to get answers to their questions. Advocates learn how to use test scores to monitor a child’s progress in special education.

They prepare for meetings, create agendas, write objectives, and use meeting worksheets and follow-up letters to clarify problems and nail down agreements.

Keep Written Records
Because documents are often the keys to success, advocates keep written records. They know that if a statement is not written down, it was not said. They make requests in writing and write polite follow-up letters to document events, discussions, and meetings.

Ask Questions, Listen to Answers
Advocates are not afraid to ask questions. When they ask questions, they listen carefully to answers. Advocates know how to use “Who, What, Why, Where, When, How, and Explain Questions” (5 Ws + H + E) to discover the true reasons for positions.

Identify Problems
Advocates learn to define and describe problems from all angles. They use their knowledge of interests, fears, and positions to develop strategies. Advocates are problem solvers. They do not waste valuable time and energy looking for people to blame.

Propose Solutions
Advocates know that parents negotiate with schools for special education services. As negotiators, advocates discuss issues and make offers or proposals. They seek “win-win” solutions that will satisfy the interests of parents and schools.

Your Assignment
Plan for the Future
What are your long-term goals for your child? What do you envision for your child in the future? If you are like most parents, you are focused on the present. You haven’t given much thought to the future. Do you expect your child to be an independent, self-sufficient member of the community? Although some children with disabilities will require assistance as adults, most will grow up to be adults who hold jobs, get married, and live independently. If you have a vision about what you want for your child in the future, you are more likely to achieve your goals.

If you believe others will make long-term plans for your child and provide your child with the necessary skills to be an independent, self-sufficient member of society, you are likely to be disappointed. Goals for your child’s future? Do you have a master plan for your child’s education? If you want your child to grow up to be an independent adult, what does your child need to learn before she leaves the public school system? What do you want?

Develop a Master Plan
If you are like many parents, you don’t have a master plan. You don’t know where you are, where you need to go, or how to get there. Do not expect school personnel to make long-term plans for your child -- this is your responsibility. Begin by thinking about your vision for your child’s future. What are your long-term goals for your child? What will your child need to learn? What services and supports will your child need to meet these goals?
Affirm Pictures, a subsidiary of Sony Pictures, has approached the NFPA to endorse its new film The Lost and Found Family. After review by the Products and Services Committee, the NFPA has agreed to endorse the movie that shows the positive effects of foster care. The Lost and Found Family is due to be released on DVD in mid-September. The NFPA and its State and Local Affiliates have been given the opportunity by the film’s producers/distributors to conduct screenings across America to show the film and to help enlighten America about foster care in a realistic way and enhance recruitment of foster families.

**Five guarded and confused foster children…**
**Two loving, but weary, foster parents…**
**One grieving former socialite...**
*Put them all under one dilapidated roof and you get eight unique individuals in a house.*

**Or maybe, just maybe, it becomes the family they’ve all been longing for.**

The Lost and Found Family is a touching story of hardship, change, and the faith that no matter how difficult the situation appears in our eyes, there is still hope.

Change affects everyone - from children in the foster-care system to seemingly well-to-do socialites. Sometimes it’s systemic; other times it’s instantaneous. Ester Hobbes has led the good life with her loving husband. But when Franklin suffers a fatal heart attack, her life changes dramatically.

Franklin’s business dealings have left Ester with little beyond the clothes on her back … and an unknown piece of rental property. Leaving the life she loves in Chicago, she heads to rural Georgia only to discover that the house she owns is the home of Tony and Ramona … and their five foster children.

Barely able to make ends meet financially and wrestling emotionally with the realities of raising their troubled foster children, the last thing Tony and Ramona are looking for is a live-in landlord … especially when they discover Ester’s lawyer has the house for sale.

After an extremely rocky start, Ester begins to befriend Crystal, Jasmin, Max, Justin, and Teri, along with their foster parents. But when word comes that the house has been sold to a developer, these fragile alliances are seemingly shattered.

But could there be an unseen way for Ester and her new “family” save their home? The Lost and Found Family reminds us that hope can always be found.
Walk Me Home….to the place I belong

The only nationwide walk for foster care

Walk Me Home the Second Time Around

by Carl D Jones
NFPA Staff

Welcome to the second year of Walk Me Home….to the place I belong, America’s only nationwide walk for foster care. Our second year began with very promising responses by more Affiliates, both State and Local, who have and will be conducting Walk Me Home events in their areas. Somewhere along the way from the beginning of 2009 until now, we lost some of our enthusiasm and our positive attitude for what we do and started to give in to the negativism in the marketplace. We became afraid that we too would fall prey to the terribly tight economy and that we would fail in our ability to raise the money necessary to fund our budgets. We started saying to ourselves, if the economy is bad and governments are reducing funding to foster care, then we will be severely hurt by it, and our prophesies were correct. We predicted we would lose funding and we did. Put another way, we decided we wouldn’t be able to raise funds by asking people to support us so we stopped asking and they stopped supporting us. Isn’t it amazing how we can predict our own future?

I don’t know about you, but I have been down this road before. I’ve been through two other recessions similar and even more financially challenging than this one. I have found that we are a resilient people. We come back from the greatest of adversities. We overcome the greatest obstacles and come back better for having been through them. Many of you have realized this and seized the day. You turned what could have been a huge negative into a positive situation. You developed for the first time or participated for a second time in this great fund and positive awareness raising event known as Walk Me Home. You joined the ranks of what I lovingly call the Walkazoids. You started letting people know you needed their support, you asked them to participate, you asked them to form teams of participants and you told them what we are doing with the funds they entrust to us. You are the ones who really believe this recession will not keep us from achieving our goals of supporting the children in our care. Thank you for your positive attitude and for realizing that we must create unrestricted, sustainable income so our associations will not fall prey to external, negative situations. If you keep the faith and keep developing your base you will succeed, I guarantee it!

When times are tough Americans are more willing to support just causes and what is more just than caring for children torn from their homes by abuse or neglect. Americans realize that if times are tough for them, times must be tougher for organizations like ours and they are willing to dig a little deeper to help us sustain our mission. But we must ask. Be-

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

~Andrew Carnegie
low are just a few of the reasons we can tell them of the need for continued support;

- to help us, especially as state governments reduce their funding of foster care nationwide,
- to help by providing funds for new training opportunities for foster families who care for the children 24 hours a day 7 days a week,
- to give a child in foster care some semblance of normalcy by having more than just the clothes on their back when they were removed from their birth home due to abuse or neglect.

Walk Me Home provides a fantastic vehicle for you to ask them, a vehicle for them to actually participate by walking with your family. They could even form their own corporate or family team and walk in the event. Families, businesses, corporations, foster care agencies and communities should be encouraged to participate in this event and the more the merrier.

**Walk Me Home** events have and are still happening all across America; from Bremerton, Washington to Palm Beach, Florida, from Palm Springs, California to Bangor, Maine and in many cities and towns in between. Your city or town could be next and we encourage you to join in the fun of conducting a **Walk Me Home** event in your hometown, simply contact the NFPA and we will be happy to work with you to establish America’s nationwide Walk for foster care as the preeminent event in your community.

If this article is the first time you’ve heard about Walk Me Home I would encourage you to go to [www.walkmehome.org](http://www.walkmehome.org) and sign up to participate in a Walk near you. If there isn’t a Walk near you, you can always start a Walk or participate in the Virtual Walk and have the funds go to the State Association in your state.

**YES, I want to be a Walkazoid !!!**

A Walkazoid is:

A visionary, a person who sees the tremendous potential of Walk Me Home then unabashedly and wholeheartedly joins in the fun & excitement that is Walk Me Home!
The United States Congress passed a key piece of child welfare legislation last year and is currently working on one more. (HR 6893) The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 addresses several concerns related to children in foster care.

An essential part of the bill will attempt to keep children in care connected to their relatives. The bill amends Part E of title IV of the Social Security Act to allow states to enter into agreements to provide kinship guardianship assistance payments to grandparents or other relatives who have assumed legal guardianship of children for whom they have fostered or cared for on a permanent basis. It also requires states to pay up to $2,000 of the total cost of nonrecurring expenses associated with obtaining legal guardianship of a child.

The bill would also make children who exit foster care for relative guardianship or adoption after the age of 16 eligible for independent living services and education and training vouchers under the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. It also makes individuals with whom kinship guardianship assistance payments are being made categorically eligible for Medicaid.

Section 103 of the bill requires a state plan for foster care and adoption assistance to provide that, within 30 days after removal of a child from the parent’s or parents’ custody, the state shall exercise due diligence to identify and notify all the child’s adult relatives of the removal.

Section 206 of the new legislation emphasizes the need to provide a
reasonable effort to place sibling groups together. Lastly, the bill clarifies that states may waive non-safety related licensing standards for relatives on a case-by-case basis.

SB 410 - The Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Act of 2009 is currently being read in the Senate Committee on Finance and was sponsored by Senator Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas.

This legislation encourages states to follow best policies and practices for supporting and retaining foster parents. The Secretary of Health and Human Services would be authorized to award grants to states to improve the empowerment, leadership, support, training, recruitment and retention of foster care, kinship care and adoptive parents.

The bill would require public and private placement agencies to provide foster parents with the following:

- Notice of scheduled meetings concerning the case planning and decision making process regarding the child in their home.
- Support services in the care of the child consistent with the child’s approved permanency plan.
- Open, complete and timely response from the agency when contacted by the foster parent.
- Pertinent information regarding the child’s medical history, educational history, general behavior and life experience, the placement circumstances for the child, and the relationship between the child or children and the child or children’s parents as soon as the agency obtains the information.
- Timely and complete information about the permanency options available to the child including but not limited to the availability of adoption assistance and payments for nonrecurring adoption expenses under the adoption agreement.
- Medical coverage for the child, post-permanency services and the availability of tuition support for the child.
- Consultation with foster parents in the decision to release the foster parents’ address to the parents of the child and notification when that information has been released.
- Assistance with the coordination of services for dealing with family loss and separation when the child leaves the foster home and when relocation is not the result of an immediate threat to the health and safety of the child.
- Information on agency policies and procedures that relate to the role of the foster parent.
- Appropriate training that will enhance skills and ability of the foster parent.
- Information on how to receive services and reach the agency personnel on a 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week basis.
- Confidentiality regarding allegations of abuse involving a member of the foster parent’s family and an assurance that the provision of such confidentiality shall not interfere with the health or safety of the child.
- The opportunity to be heard regarding agency decisions or practices and an assurance that the agency shall not discharge, threaten, or otherwise discriminate or retaliate against a foster parent for questioning the decision or practices of the agency.

For more information on this or any other legislation related to child welfare log onto www.thomas.org or visit www.NFPAonline.org.
With every association there is always a need to examine what can be enhanced and added to its membership benefits. NFPA is in the process of doing just that through the work of the newly created Products and Services Committee. The committee’s purpose is to identify products and services that increase the benefits of being a member of NFPA. It also is charged with finding resources that will provide residual income to NFPA and its State Affiliates to offset the cost of providing resources and support to foster parents and children in care.

In May 2009, the Products and Services committee began carrying out its tasks of increasing membership benefits by identifying what are the current needs of foster parents and children in care. Its first task was to research and present a corporate endorsement agreement with Pre-Paid Legal Services (see next page). As a result of their work, the committee presented a corporate endorsement agreement to the Board of Directors at the 2009 NFPA Annual Conference in Reno, Nevada that will provide royalties to NFPA and State Affiliates. Royalties of policies sold under this agreement will be split with 30% going to NFPA and 70% to the participating State Affiliates.

The Products and Services committee recently completed a paper survey that was distributed to attendees at two lunches during the NFPA Annual Conference; and an online survey that was distributed via email to all NFPA members after the conference. The purpose of both surveys was to identify and prioritize resources and services that are needed the most by foster parents and children in care. Survey results show NFPA members are interested in receiving online training; as well as discounts on health insurance, and every day products such as diapers and clothing for the children placed in foster homes.

The Products and Services Committee is working closely with Carl Jones, NFPA Executive Director and the NFPA Information Technical volunteer to ensure these newly identify resources and services can be properly integrated onto the NFPA website, and easily accessed by members. Future plans for this committee include expanding its list of recommended books that focus on issues related to foster care, and improving the accessibility of those books to NFPA members.

The Products and Services Committee has quickly and successfully completed its early tasks in carrying out its mission. However, it still needs input from NFPA members. Please take a few minutes accessing and completing the committee’s current online survey by clicking on the following link click here or visit www.NFPAonline.org. Deadline for completing the survey is September 30th, 2009. If you would like to learn more about the current and future work of the Products and Services committee, please contact Irene Clements, Committee Chairperson, at irene.clements@lsss.org or Carl Jones at cjones@nfpaonline.org.

About the Author: Lisa Mathey is a member of the NFPA Products and Services Committee. She is also the Board President for FACES of Virginia Families, which is a NFPA State Affiliate. Lisa resides in Ashburn, Virginia with her husband, Gary and two children.
Protect Your Legal Rights & Your Identity

FOSTER FAMILY PLAN

Foster Family Life Event Legal Plan

While identity theft coverage is very important, it is equally important to have access to legal counsel for everyday and unexpected life events.

**Preventive Legal Services:**
- Unlimited Phone Consultations on Unlimited Matters
- Unlimited Letters Written on members Behalf
- Unlimited Contract/Document Review (ten pages or less per document)
- Will Preparation & Durable Power of Attorney (including yearly updates)

**Additional Legal Services:**
- **Motor Vehicle Legal Services** Representation (Moving Violations, Driver’s License (Reinstatement) Assistance, Defense of criminal charges, Personal Injury and Property Damage Recovery)
- **Administrative Inquiry Benefit** In the event an administrative inquiry arises from you or your spouse’s responsibility as a licensed foster parent, you will receive up to 10 hours of legal consultation, advice, and representation for 2 inquiries or investigations per year. Limited to 5 hours per occurrence.
- **Administrative Hearing Benefit** In the event that inquiry moves to an administrative hearing, you and your spouse will receive the following benefits: Your 1st year of benefits you will receive 116 hours of hearing time, and 4 hours of preparation and consultation with your Provider Law Firm.
  - 2nd year = 132 hours, and 8 hours prep and consult
  - 3rd year = 148 hrs and 12 hrs prep and consult
  - 4th year = 164 hrs and 16 hrs prep and consult
  - 5th year = 180 hrs and 20 hrs prep and consult

**Legal Shield:**
- 24-hour toll-free access to legal assistance in the event of an arrest, detainment or questioning by a law enforcement officer.

**Identity Theft Shield**
Covers all 5 areas of identity theft: Financial, Social Security, Medical, Driver’s License and Character/Criminal

**Evaluation of your current credit standing with detailed analysis**
- An up-to-date credit report (looking for accounts you may not be aware of etc...)
- A personal credit score

**Continuous (Daily) Credit Monitoring looking for:**
- New accounts opened in your name
- Derogatory notations
- Public records
- Inquiries made
- Change of address requests (updates with Post Office daily)

**Complete Identity Restoration:**
- Trained Experts will take the steps to restore your good name and credit for you
- No out of pocket expenses and time spent away from work
- Fraud alert notifications will be sent on your behalf
- Applicable follow ups will be done with affected agencies and institutions, including:
  - Credit card companies
  - Financial institutions
  - All three credit repositories
  - Social Security Administration
  - Federal Trade Commission
  - Department of Motor Vehicles
  - Law enforcement
  - US Postal Service, etc...

**Proactive searches after a theft occurs:**
- Proactive searches of applicable local and national databases will be made on your behalf.

**Cost and Coverage**

Your policy is only $25.90 a month for Identity Theft Shield and Legal Plan Coverage.

**Identity Theft Services Cover:**
- The Primary Member & The Spouse or Significant Other

**Legal Services Cover:**
- The Primary Member, The Spouse or Significant Other, Never-married, dependent children up to age 21 who live at home, Never-married, dependent children up to age 23 who are full-time college students, Children up to age 18 for whom you are legal guardian, and Any dependent child, regardless of age, who is mentally or physically disabled

Please contact:
Maryann Griffin at 512.917.1593 email: mgriffin2016@austin.rr.com or
Valerie Cooper at 682.465.0337 email: valerie.cooper@rocketmail.com
if you would like to enroll or have any questions about the plan.
Join us for the
40th Annual NFPA Education Conference
May 29-June 2, 2010
at the
Marriott Waterfront Hotel
Baltimore, MD
For more information call (800) 557-5238 or visit
www.NFPAonline.org

National Advocate
National Foster Parent Association
2313 Tacoma Ave. S
Tacoma, WA. 98402

Address Service Requested