

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange is a program of Judson Center and is funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

To learn about foster care adoption and view photolistings and videos of waiting children, visit our website at [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org).



**Curt, Maleena and Alicia Wright.**

## *Patience and persistence pay off*

### **Adoption from foster care just seemed right for Wright family**

Adoptive parents Alicia and Curt Wright admit to entering the adoption process a bit naïve. Their first real discussion of it came three years ago on a trip from their countryside home outside Leslie, Mich., to Altoona, Pa. The seven-hour adventure gave the stay-at-home wife – who runs a home-based woodworking business – and her pastor-husband plenty of time to chat about adoption from foster care, and their enthusiasm for the idea

mounted along the way. “We looked on the (Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange) website ([www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org)) and said, ‘We should do this,’” Curt said. When they returned from their trip, the couple maintained their eagerness, and they muse now about their lack of awareness of the adoption process. “I remember looking and getting all teary and saying, ‘Oh, there’s all these kids,’” Alicia said. “We even inquired about a kid,”

Curt said, “but somebody said, ‘Do you even have a worker?’”

#### **A little background**

For Curt, adoption from foster care seemed like a natural fit. Before becoming a pastor, he had worked for Children’s Protective Services, and before that, he worked at a residential facility.

“I think the seeds were planted there of just seeing the need for it,” he said.

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# Advice for adoptive parents from adoptive parents

Even though their journey to adoption ended happily, Alicia and Curt Wright shared suggestions for other adoptive parents to help smooth the process of adopting from foster care.

**Get help from a MARE adoption navigator right away.** Not only will you get possible matches with a youth, but you'll also receive a sympathetic ear. "It's nice to talk to someone who's not with your agency but knows how everything works," Alicia said.

**If it's possible, talk to a child's caregiver.** The Wrights met with the foster parents of their daughter, now adopted, Maleena. "That was really helpful because you have all the between-the-lines questions that can't be captured on paper," Curt said. "Even the workers don't know the subtle things like what the morning routine is like."

**Take it easy during transition time.** During initial visits, the Wrights took Maleena to a couple of fun spots, but she also spent more ordinary time with them. "One day we just brought her home and just had her hang out," Alicia said. "She got to meet all of the animals." "I think it's good that they had some of those quieter moments," said MARE Adoption Navigator Maggie White. "Oftentimes, when families are doing visitation, they do lots of big, big things. Then when the kids move home it's like, 'Wait a minute, you're supposed to be taking me to Chuck E. Cheese.'"

**Ask the difficult questions.** "It's worth asking hard, uncomfortable questions because there are so



**The Wright family with MARE Adoption Navigator Maggie White.**

many kids out there with so many needs," Curt said. "There's one of those kids who would be the best fit for your family."

**According to Curt, "Be realistic in the process and not overly idealistic."** "That's excellent advice," White agreed. "I think everybody goes into this process with a huge open heart, but you've got to let your head come into play too."

**Make the journey.** "It takes time to get there, but it's worth it," Alicia said.

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For Alicia, there was no question about the direction the couple would take when adopting a child.

"It was always adoption from foster care," she said.

So they went to their agency's orientation and eventually received a completed adoption home study and foster care license. However, before attending orientation, the Wrights looked at the MARE website again, and a youth captured their attention.

"There was a teenage boy, and I remember showing our family his video," Curt said. "Then the process went from an idea to a reality. It went from being a

good idea to 'I can see this happening.'"

## Bumps in the road

Like other adoptive families, the Wrights faced some challenges and had some disappointments along the way, even one that Curt called "devastating." They had self-doubts about whether they were good enough to parent a child from foster care.

"We were making a few inquiries and getting, 'No, you're not a good fit,'" Alicia said.

"And sometimes we would get no response at all," Curt added.

"Yeah," said Alicia, "so we were wondering if nobody

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thought we were going to be good parents.”

That’s when MARE Adoption Navigator Maggie White stepped in.

“I remember venting to her about some of the things like workers not getting back to us,” Alicia said. “She helped us by saying, ‘It’s not you.’”

White also helped the couple get their family profile onto the MARE website.

“When I was putting them on the MARE Family Registry, they were one of the families who stood out,” White said. “They have this experience, they have this great family support, they have flexibility in their schedules and they’re open to a pretty decent age range.”

### At last, a match!

When children are being added to mare.org, MARE staff send suggestions to the child’s worker of approved waiting families who may be a good match. In December of 2016, an 11-year-old girl with blonde hair surprisingly the same shade as Alicia’s, was about to be photolisted on mare.org.

White suggested the Wrights as a possible match for Maleena, whose interests and needs seemed to align perfectly with the Wright family. Maleena’s worker followed up on the suggestion, and it wasn’t long afterward when Alicia called White excited about the information they had just received regarding Maleena.

“We met Maleena at her

foster parents’ house,” Alicia said.

“I was really excited, but I was also really nervous,” Maleena said.

“We were really nervous, too,” said Alicia, who added that when the couple saw Maleena standing near the front door and shouting, “Hi, hi guys,” it calmed them down.

From there, the relationship slowly flourished. The Wrights invited Maleena to their house for a couple of day visits, and she met the family’s cat and two dogs. Maleena then spent a night at the house and eventually a weekend.

### A quick transition

Before long, the Wrights signed the Intent to Adopt, and Maleena moved in, something that she admits seemed quite strange.

“I remember when I first moved in, it was really weird because I was living in a new house,” Maleena said. “It was just really weird thinking about, ‘Wow, I’m going to be staying here the rest of my life.’ After a couple of months went by, it felt like I had been here the whole time.”

In the end, the adoption process went from first meeting to final court order in about

seven months. Now the family enjoys spending time together. Their favorite activities include vacationing, golfing, playing games and sharing dinnertime.

The Wrights are grateful they went through the ups and downs of the adoption process and found their forever daughter.

“It was like she came to us,” Alicia said.



# “BOFF!” “KAPOW!” : She loves outdoors are in his dreams : and arts and crafts

Garrivonni loves the 1960’s television show “Batman.” To make his weekends complete, Garrivonni teams his love of the show along with visiting his favorite restaurant.



**Garrivonni,  
C09390**

“His favorite weekend pastime is watching the ‘original’ Batman television shows and eating out at Pizza Hut,” says Garrivonni’s worker. However, Garrivonni doesn’t just like going out to eat. “He likes home-cooked meals that consist of chili, mac and cheese, barbecue ribs, potato salad and cabbage,” says Garrivonni’s worker.

His worker calls Garrivonni a “cautiously friendly young man” who likes reading, helping around the house and building things. He loves playing with Ninjago Legos and enjoys playing Nintendo video games.

When he gets older, Garrivonni wants to join the Army and become an FBI agent when he finishes his military service.

Amber loves the outdoors, and it shows in her interests and her favorite activities.



**Amber,  
C08055**

When it’s warm, she likes playing on the swing set, and when it’s cold, she enjoys sloshing in the snow. Amber also loves swimming. When she gets older, she wants to turn her love of the outdoors into a career by becoming a storm chaser.

In addition to outdoor activities, Amber enjoys playing with dolls, listening to music and reading books. One of Amber’s favorite things is her Lego Friends play sets. She particularly enjoys anything to do with Monster High and mermaids.

Her list of favorite things includes pizza for food, bunny for animal, and pink and green for color. Her favorite subject in school is art.

“Amber is very artistic and loves arts and crafts,” says her worker. “She has a silly personality and loves to tell and hear jokes.”

## Save the date for the Michigan Heart Gallery Grand Opening

Saturday, April 28, 2018

Emagine Theater, Royal Oak

Register by contacting Jessica Thompson at [jessica\\_thompson@judsoncenter.org](mailto:jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org) or call 734-528-2070.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for updates.



## Calendar of Events

**February 17, 2018**  
**MARE Meet & Greet**, Royal Oak  
11 a.m.-2 p.m.

**March 24, 2018**  
**MARE Meet & Greet**, Brighton  
11 a.m.-2 p.m.

**April 7, 2018**  
**MARE Meet & Greet**, Location TBD  
11 a.m.-2 p.m.

For more information regarding these events please contact Jessica Thompson, MARE Recruitment Specialist: [jessica\\_thompson@judsoncenter.org](mailto:jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org)

Looking to meet some of the children on MARE who are available for adoption?

**MARE  
Meet  
&  
Greet**

Attend a Meet & Greet! Contact us at 800-589-6273 or at [mare@judsoncenter.org](mailto:mare@judsoncenter.org) for more information and upcoming events.