

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 photolistsings and videos of waiting children, visit our website at www.mare.org.



You can partner with MARE to host a Meet & Greet

STORY BY **JESSICA THOMPSON, MARE RECRUITMENT SPECIALIST**

You know, you can partner with MARE to host a Meet & Greet for MARE youth photolisted in your area.

Since Meet & Greet registration fills up quickly for youth, we want to make sure that all youth are able to attend these events. MARE has collaborated with several residential facilities and adoption agencies throughout the state to host Meet & Greets specifically for youth on their caseloads.

What we need from you to host a Meet & Greet

We typically need space large enough for 40-50 people with room for lunch and any planned activities. We are open to hosting the event in the community if your agency does not have the needed space.

We have partnered with bowling alleys, trampoline parks, art studios and more. If you have connections to any of those places within your community, we would be happy to help coordinate it. MARE has a small allotted budget for each Meet & Greet to assist with things such as food and youth prizes. On the day of the event, MARE staff is present to assist with the flow of the event and ensure that everything runs smoothly.



MARE teamed with The New Foster Care for a recent Meet & Greet at an arts facility near the agency.

We are striving to make these interactive events a really fun and enjoyable experience for all the youth and families who attend.

To further explore hosting a Meet & Greet in your area, contact Jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org or 734-528-2070.





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) 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.

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.’”

See **Success** on page 3

Success, continued from page 2

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. “We were wondering if nobody thought we were going to be good parents.”

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

“I remember venting to her,” 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



The Wright family with MARE Adoption Navigator Maggie White.

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.

A change that you'll welcome

STORY BY **JEREMIAH BALAZOVICH, MARE DATA ANALYST**

A new feature has been added to the MARE website.

As you navigate your worker dashboard, you will notice that there are now "Add/Edit Report" links within your Child Inquiries and Family Inquiries tables. Clicking on these links allows you to complete an Inquiry Follow-Up Report regarding children on your caseload and for families you are working with who have placed inquiries for children on the MARE website.

Previously, these reports were completed via a Word document that was emailed to you by MARE Adoption Worker Liaison Martha Kaczala, who sent them 21 days after an Inquiry

was placed on the MARE website. These reports will now be available for you to complete the moment an inquiry is placed.

However, they must still be completed with an Inquiry Outcome within 30 days of an inquiry submission.

To aid in policy compliance, Martha will continue to send you email reminders when these reports are due, but the reports will no longer be completed and submitted via the previous Word document. All reports must now be completed by following the new links on your dashboard.

If you have questions or concerns, contact jeremiah_balazovich@judsoncenter.org, 734-528-2036 or martha_kaczala@judsoncenter.org, 734-528-2007.



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 or call 734-528-2070.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for updates.



Calendar of Events

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 contact Jessica Thompson, MARE Recruitment Specialist: jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org

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