

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.



Here's your primetime primer

Tips to help you get your youth ready for the big event

STORY AND PHOTO BY LAURA RUTKOWSKI, MARE ADOPTION WORKER LIAISON

MARE Meet and Greets are a fun day that allow waiting children and waiting approved families to interact in the hopes of finding an adoptive match. These events are effective for recruitment, but also can be emotionally charged for both the children and families who attend. As their adoption worker, it is crucial for you to prepare them for the day, to allow them to enjoy themselves and promote the best matches. A quick conversation about the event can really go a long way. Here are a few things to help guide you:



shouldn't be in attendance at a Meet & Greet. If a family who previously inquired on your waiting youth is attending the event, think of how you can communicate this to the child. "I met a cool family, and I am talking with their adoption worker to see if they are cool enough for you."; "I got to know Laura and Joe and they seem really nice. I heard they are coming today as well so you'll get to tell me if you think they are nice, too." Remember they will repeat what they hear so it will not benefit anyone if the child spends the afternoon telling all the families he or she is already "matched."

BeYOUtiful!

Remind them to be themselves. Our main goal is for the child and family to have fun while showing their true personalities. Not everyone is the best artist or the best at relay races, but each child and each parent is their best self. Being true and genuine is how real matches are made. Find ways to encourage this to remove any pressure they may be feeling.

Watch your language!

We all know kids repeat everything they hear, and they hear more than we think sometimes. If at a visit or FTM or other meeting, you talk to them about being "matched," they may not understand their case status or circumstance. The term matched is very subjective in our adoption and recruitment world. If a child is truly matched with a family, he or she does not need recruitment efforts, and therefore

Safety first!

To allow for a successful day, MARE staff always begins the day with an orientation to review the rules. The word "rules" can come across harsh, but MARE staff discuss a few areas that help them understand that the day is about having fun. We remind them they are going home with whoever brought them to the event. We chat about what topics are good to bring up when talking with families and their peers as well as some that are not so good. We inform them where the bathrooms are and let them know their chaperone or a MARE staff member must accompany them on trips to the bathroom. Last, we go over the schedule of the day so there are no surprises about what is going to happen when, in an effort to promote smooth transitions.

If you have any questions or want to discuss Meet & Greets further, contact MARE's Youth Specialist, Jennifer Brooks, or me, Laura Rutkowski, MARE's Adoption Worker Liaison. I hope to meet you at one of our events soon!

Victoria, left, chats with a photolisted youth, Ceiana, C08799, taken at the recent MARE Meet & Greet at Novi Faith Community Presbyterian Church.



Meet Hannah, eager to jump in ...

MARE's new Communications Specialist

Hannah Dunne is the new MARE Communications Specialist whose duties include coordinating videography services and assisting with the Michigan Heart Gallery. She graduated from Wayne State University with a degree in Media Arts with a focus on Media Production. It was in her senior year at Wayne that she first heard of MARE and participated in the 2014 Heart Gallery video project along with some fellow students. She was able to create a video for one of the children in need of a forever family and fell in love with the thought that her passion for media arts could help others.

Hannah also has a background in working with children and adolescents. She spends a lot of her free time serving in her church's youth ministry where she enjoys helping children and teens reach their fullest potential. She can't wait to start meeting the children at MARE and creating videos for them.

Contact Hannah at 734-528-2063 or hannah_dunne@judsoncenter.org



... and Maria, always willing to help



New Adoption Navigator Program Supervisor

Maria Rojas is the newly appointed Supervisor for the Adoption Navigator Program. Since 2006, she has served the child welfare system in various capacities and has discovered that working in adoption has been the most rewarding. With six years of experience in adoption, Maria thrives on helping others and has found that her passion lies within having the opportunity to help build forever families. With regard to one of her greatest achievements, Maria writes: "In terms of work-related achievements, nothing is greater than knowing that I have had a positive and long-lasting impact on a child's life."

Maria is a very family-oriented person and the mother of two young children. She is an outgoing and giving person who won't hesitate to put the needs of others before her own. Maria enjoys writing, gardening, listening to music and, above all, spending time with her family.

Contact Maria at 734-528-2042 or maria_rojas@judsoncenter.org.

We're gonna celebrate and have a good time at the 2015 Kinship Adoption Festival!



- Register waiting youth today for the 2015 Kinship Adoption Festival at www.mare.org.

- State park day passes will be available for those who need one and who register with MARE in advance.

- Attractions include video and lawn games, the Detroit SWAT team, a clown, a fire truck, a DJ and a hot dog vendor.

- For questions or more information, contact MARE Recruitment Specialist Jessica Thompson at 734-528-1695 or email jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org.

2015 Kinship Adoption Festival

Kaiser family
By Douglas Bacon



**Sunday, Sept. 27,
1-5 p.m.**

**Belle Isle State
Park Casino, Detroit**

For more information, contact the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, 800-589-6273, or visit www.mare.org

• Agency booths • Food available • Attractions and activities for all ages • Meet waiting youth • Visit the Michigan Heart Gallery • Attend informational workshops



Mirth and Merriment at MARE Meet & Greet



Everyone seemed to have a great time at MARE's recent Meet & Greet in Novi. Counterclockwise from top, Koda (C08642) and Deasia (C08771) puzzle over a cereal box puzzle; Marshall (C08672) gives a thumbs up to the festivities; Phoenix (C07998) conjures up a game involving the best aero-designs for paper planes; Emodjion (C08665) keeps his eye on the ball-oon so it won't touch the floor.

Photos by Laura Rutkowski • MARE Adoption Worker Liaison

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 12, 2015
MARE Meet & Greet, Flint
 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

September 19, 2015
Spaulding Meet & Greet, Royal Oak

September 26, 2015
MARE Meet & Greet, Midland, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

September 27, 2015
Kinship Adoption Festival, Belle Isle, Detroit
 Talk with adoption workers and adoptive parents, attend informational

workshops, participate in children's activities and meet some of the Detroit area's waiting children. Visit www.mare.org for more information.

October 10, 2015
MARE Meet & Greet, Grand Rapids
 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

For more information regarding these events please contact Jessica Thompson, MARE Recruitment Specialist: jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org