

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).



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# *A guide for parenting a child with challenges*

STORY BY **KELLI OSTROSKY, MARE ADOPTION NAVIGATOR**

Parenting can present as many challenges as rewards. The challenges can be the result of behaviors associated with trauma, cognitive impairments, developmental delays and mental and physical diagnoses. To guide your child to more positive behaviors, it takes a willingness to learn new and focused ways to parent.

Here are some strategies to help guide you.

## **Educate yourself and be willing to modify your life**

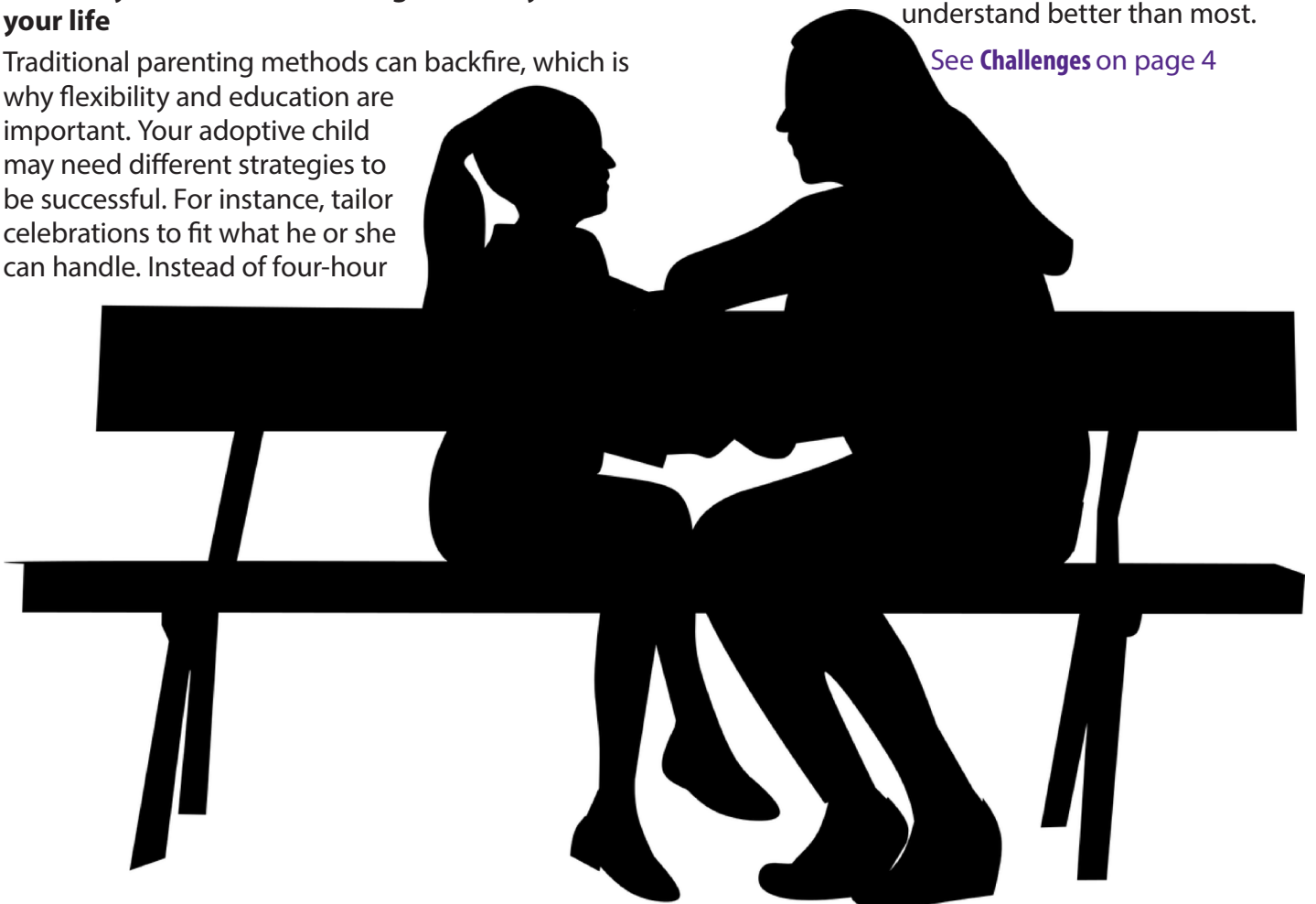
Traditional parenting methods can backfire, which is why flexibility and education are important. Your adoptive child may need different strategies to be successful. For instance, tailor celebrations to fit what he or she can handle. Instead of four-hour

birthday celebrations, go for one or two. Instead of a week-long vacation, do shorter day trips, and be aware that holidays and other special occasions can trigger your child's emotions.

## **Evaluate your relationships**

Focus your energy on spending more time with helpful, supportive and understanding friends and relatives. Expand your circle of other foster and adoptive parents. They walk a similar path and understand better than most.

See [Challenges](#) on page 4



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## Cordell plans to be a globetrotter of sorts

Cordell wants to become a global traveler. His desired destinations include Egypt, Rome, Athens, Miami and Colorado.

Cordell also wants to visit Europe to learn about its rich history. His European dream destination makes sense because Cordell wants to become an archaeologist when he gets older.

He hopes to travel to Colorado just for a vacation and to Miami for its fine hook-and line-times. "I heard they have good fishing," says Cordell.

Ask him what he fishes for and Cordell will hold up his hands shoulder width apart to show the size of the big ones he catches. Cordell's other favorite things include the color blue, dogs and farm critters, and he likes all kinds of games such as board, card and dice games. He also likes reading and listening to music.

In addition to dreaming about worldly adventures, Cordell longs for a forever family. He hopes for one who enjoys the kind of outdoor activities that interest him, and he wants one who'll give him unconditional love.

## Anijiah hopes her desert dreams come true

Pardon Anijiah if she dreams of Carlsbad Caverns, ancient Aztec ruins or the desert and mountains of New Mexico.

If she could visit anywhere on Earth, Anijiah would travel to the Land of Enchantment because, "It would be fun," she says of New Mexico.

Anijiah loves having fun, and her worker describes Anijiah as a sweet, caring and funny girl who enjoys being around people and making others laugh. "Anijiah is easy to talk to and a joy to spend time with," her worker says. "Anijiah is a people pleaser and loves talking one-on-one."

Anijiah looks out for the interests of others and wants to become a doctor "because she cares about other people," says her worker. Still, she finds time to entertain herself by cheerleading, dancing, drawing and playing video games.

"Anijiah loves styling her hair," adds her worker. When she's asked about the qualities she wants in a future forever family, Anijiah says she wants one with a pet cat and fish.

"Most importantly," says her worker, "Anijiah wants a family who cares for her."

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# *MARE program can provide resources for college-bound teens*

Adopting a teen can bring different questions than adopting a younger child, and MARE Match Support specialists are ready to help get you the answers.

One question you might consider involves their post-secondary education plan. There are a plethora of college and technical opportunities as well as financial support available for the youth today.

Match Support specialists can educate families on grants and scholarships designed specifically for students who have been in foster care, help schedule and arrange college tours, locate support programs within universities for foster and adopted youth to assist in the transition process, and educate families on the types of life skills that may be important for them to work on with their teen, such as banking, budgeting, laundry, grocery and meal planning basic cooking skills, and time management ideas like using a daily planner.

Our specialists also provide 90 days of family-centered services, which include offering educational resources, training opportunities, referrals to support groups and a variety of other supportive services to help you and your teen succeed now and in the future.

In addition to answering questions about resources that are available to teens, Match Support specialists listen about successes and struggles and assist with any bumps that may develop during the transition into the home and the adoption process.

If you're one of those families or you know of an adoptive family who could use extra support, call 734-528-2020.



## **MICHIGAN ADOPTION MONTH**

**Giving thanks for families**

**NOVEMBER 2018**

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter during November for Adoption Month. We'll have features about waiting youth, stories about exceptional adoptive families, updates about courthouse celebrations and more.

For a list of Adoption Month celebrations, visit [www.mare.org/MI-Adoption-Day](http://www.mare.org/MI-Adoption-Day).

To contact the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, call 800-589-6273.

**Challenges**, continued from page 1

### **Create a structured routine**

Break down the steps of your child's day in a calendar or notes. The steps should guide your child from getting up in the morning to going to bed at night. Involve the child to create a sense of belonging and responsibility.

### **Know your own triggers**

We all have them. It's all about awareness. Maybe it's lying, stealing, leaving food in the living room or something else. Once you know your triggers, you can work towards better controlling your own reactions. When the parent reacts strongly, the child receives negative feedback and the behavioral loop continues.

### **Get to know your child**

If children have a mental disability and or impulse control challenges, understand their limitations and

how to build supports for them to reach their fullest potential. The best way to do this is to be nearby and be a partner in their learning. This will cut down on much stress and behavior concerns.

### **Focus on positives**

Sometimes, saying what to do instead of what not to do is best. This is especially helpful for the traumatized child who craves positive feedback. For example, if you're going to the grocery store, instead of telling the child not to wander away, tell him to keep his hand on the cart, then say he can put the cart away at the end of the trip. A positive approach and reward will help guide children towards more appropriate, safe behavior while earning something they enjoy.

### **Seek respite and self-care**

Since this is much easier said than done, schedule times to care for yourself. Don't be afraid to put yourself first sometimes. Learn who provides respite care in your area and get to know those resources.



*MARE adoption navigators are experienced adoptive parents who offer guidance and personal knowledge to potential adoptive families. Staff members include, from left, Judith McNaughton, Kim Ross, Kelli Ostrosky, Kimberly Wolowski, Dorene Jones, Mac Ballantine and Amber Tiemeyer. For assistance, call 800-589-6273 and ask to talk to an adoption navigator.*

## **Calendar of Events**

**November 10, 2018**

**MARE Meet & Greet**, Brighton

11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Followed by a Waiting Family Forum hosted by MARE adoption navigators.

2-4 p.m.

**January 13, 2019**

**MARE Meet & Greet**, Pontiac

11 a.m.-2 p.m.

**January 26, 2019**

**MARE Meet & Greet**, Detroit

11 a.m.-2 p.m.

**February 16, 2019**

**MARE Meet & Greet**, Kalamazoo

11 a.m.-2 p.m.

*For more information regarding these events*

*contact Jessica Thompson, MARE Recruitment*

*Specialist: [jessica\\_thompson@judsoncenter.org](mailto:jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org)*