



Youth Newsletter

Spring 2024

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Using self-empowerment can help youth find their adoptive family

Youth in foster care have more opportunities to advocate for themselves than they may realize. This is why the Youth Advisory Board recently met to discuss self-empowerment in adoption recruitment. The group discussed what self-empowerment is, how to work at it and why it is so important.

What it is: Self-empowerment is taking control of your life through action and decision making.

Why: If you feel powerless, this can help you feel more in control and give you confidence.

How to get better at it: You need to know your strengths and weaknesses, set your goals, work on what you struggle with and practice moving toward your goals. Journaling and meditation are great reflective

exercises to try. You can use positive affirmations to raise your self-esteem. Talk with a trusted and supportive friend or adult in your life about your goals.

How this can be applied to adoption recruitment: When you fill out your MARE consent page, you control how MARE recruits for you, which means we only do what you say we can. How much or how few recruitment activities you choose determines how often you are seen by potential adoptive families. If you want to change what you consented to in terms of recruitment, then you can talk to your adoption worker about updating your consent page.

Join us for a Youth Advisory Board meeting! To join us for a YAB, have your Adoption Worker contact Gabrielle at gabrielle_werkheiser@judsoncenter.org.

On the horizon

**September 21
2024 Michigan Heart
Gallery Premiere**
Emagine Theaters
Royal Oak
10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
The event will feature a movie, luncheon and more. Registration details to be announced.

To learn about resources available to youth living in foster care, visit Mare.org > For Youth or contact your worker.



Aspen (C010647), above, Cal (C09585), right, and Aiden (C010323) and Chloe (C010425), far right, joined the festivities recently at the MARE Meet & Greet at the Sloan Museum of Discovery in Flint.



Have fun and get to meet adoptive parents at MARE Meet & Greets

STORY BY **KIMBERLY GROVER, MARE ADOPTION NAVIGATOR**

You might have heard about MARE Meet & Greets from your adoption worker, and if you haven't heard or can't remember what they're all about, here are reasons for you to join the festivities.

These events are aimed at providing youth who await adoption a fun day of activities while also giving adoptive families and youth the chance to meet and get to know each other.

The events can include activities

such as making arts and crafts, engaging with animals at a petting farm or meeting up at a bowling alley, baseball game, zoo or museum.

Although attendance will vary based on location, the events are small enough and structured to maximize interaction between youth and adults.

Each event follows the same basic structure. Adoptive parents as well as youth will arrive, sign in and attend separate orientations

to answer questions and outline what to expect during the event. MARE staff will review the conduct guidelines, provide some tips for interactions between youth and adoptive parents and describe how the event will be organized.

After the orientation, the Meet & Greet generally starts off with an ice-breaker activity so youth and families can introduce themselves. Many Meet & Greets then go on to activities involving playing games while providing opportunities for

youth and families to interact and get to know each other.

After an active morning, lunch is served, which provides additional, more casual time to interact. Afternoons generally consist of more opportunities for youth and families to interact before the event wraps up with a debriefing, which includes separate sessions for youth and adults.

MARE staff then answers any of questions before having participants complete a survey that lets us know about any possible mutual connections between youth and families. Typically, 20-25 youth and 6-10 families attend the in-person Meet & Greets.

The virtual Meet and Greets are very similar to the in-person events. They are often a bit shorter since we don't serve virtual lunch, but youth and families still have the opportunity to meet via Zoom and interact through a designated activity or game.

These virtual opportunities allow the inclusion of youth and prospective adoptive parents who might otherwise not be able to attend in-person events. Typically, 10-15 youth and six or so families attend the virtual events.

Whether it's in-person or virtual, registration for Meet & Greets is posted on Mare.org with notifications of upcoming events also mentioned on MARE's Facebook page. For a list of upcoming dates, see the calendar on page 4.

If you'd like to attend one of these events, contact your worker.



Jordan (C09998) was one of the youth having a good time at a recent Meet & Greet.

Campus support for foster care youth in Michigan

STORY BY **GABRIELLE WERKHEISER, MARE YOUTH SPECIALIST**

Did you know that there is support for college students who have experienced foster care?

MARE met with the coordinator of the MAGIC (Mentorship, Access and Guidance in College) Program at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) to learn more about their program as well as others at many college and university campuses across Michigan.

Each campus program is different, but at Eastern Michigan University's campus specifically, it is open to any student who has experienced foster care from the age of 14 and older. This program provides support for students to increase the chance of graduation.

This program is designed to look after the well-being

of the student in all areas, not just their academic needs. Students are paired with a mentor whom they meet with monthly to receive academic support, and students can attend workshops and receive financial aid. EMU also has a pantry for the students that has food, laundry and personal hygiene products available.

Whether it's EMU or another university in the state, this is a resource you should absolutely consider. The support that is offered is different for each campus, so you will need to contact the coordinator at the campus of your choice to learn more.

There is a list of participating campuses on Fostering Success Michigan's website under Campus Support at <http://fosteringuccessmichigan.com/library/campus-support-in-michigan>



Recyclables provide fodder for feeders for feathered friends

WAIT! Make sure the recycle truck doesn't take the treasure in the bin! If it's a container and if you can modify it a bit with the help of a close adult, you can provide a smorgasbord for birds and squirrels.

There's an endless number of ways to provide seed, suet, nuts, fruits and butters for our feathered and furred friends. A simple online search will yield a wealth of ideas.

Below are a few links to get you started.

If you're worried about attracting unwanted critters to your yard, try making a bird bath and providing nesting materials instead. These can be just as enticing! A hike and a scavenger hunt can be a fun way to find these natural materials.

Regardless of which project you pick, choose the right project for your skill level.

Spring is in the air and so are the migrating birds. See how many you can attract!



<https://earth911.com/home-garden/7-diy-recycled-bird-feeders/>



<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-make-diy-bird-feeder-recycled-materials>



<https://www.todaysparent.com/family/crafts/craft-bird-feeder/>

Calendar

April 27

MARE In-Person Meet & Greet
Bloomfield Township
10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

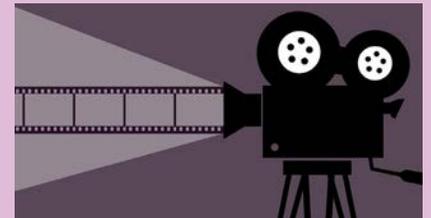
May 18

MARE In-Person Meet & Greet
Oxford
10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

June 22

MARE In-Person Meet & Greet
Holland
10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

For more information, have your worker contact jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org or call 734-528-2070.



Did you know

Videos are made for kids listed on the MARE website who have been waiting for a family. If you've been waiting for a few months and want a video, tell your worker you want a video made and your worker can call MARE staff. We will come to your foster home or placement and do an interview!