

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 photolisting and videos of waiting children, visit our website at [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org).



# *In-depth profiles go deeper into the interests of youth awaiting adoption*

MARE has started a new recruitment tool called the "In-Depth Profile," in which youth help plan, execute and edit their own videos.

This new recruitment concept began with the Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE), which started looking at videos for youth in a new way. They created In-Depth Profiles for some of their photolisted teens, giving them an opportunity to tell their story in their own words.

Those videos have become a hit on the NWAE website ([nwae.org](http://nwae.org)) and have led to matches between youth and adoptive parents, so

with their help, MARE wanted to give it a try.

MARE and NWAE had worked together previously and developed a relationship with each other, and thanks to an initiative by the Children's Bureau and AdoptUSKids, the two adoption exchanges began collaborating so MARE staff could learn how the In-Depth Profile process works.

"I was so excited when NWAE approached MARE to partner on this project," says MARE Program Manager Michelle Parra. "It's wonderful to have their guidance in starting this new recruitment

tool for youth."

The first step in the In-Depth profile process involves contacting selected teens to determine if they're open to adoption and interested in participating in making their own video. Teens then select how they want to be represented, and they help in picking the location for the video shoot.

The first project that the two adoption exchanges worked on was a feature video for Michael (C08549), who talked to NWAE and MARE staff and said he wanted his

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*Michael didn't just hit a home run with his In-Depth Profile. He knocked it out of the park. Check it out at [Mare.org](http://Mare.org) > For Families > View Waiting Children or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/MichiganAdoptionResourceExchange](http://www.facebook.com/MichiganAdoptionResourceExchange).*

**Update: Michael has been matched with a family.**



# Family shares tips with adoptive parents

In the winter Professional Newsletter, we introduced you to the Brooks family – Jen, who’s MARE’s permanency specialist, her husband Matt, an attorney at an auto insurance claims firm and Cameron, the 8-year-old son they fostered and adopted. Here, Matt and Jen offer advice for couples who are in the thinking stage of adopting from foster care.



## Other than selecting an agency and getting licensed, what are some of the first things to be considered?

**Jen:** The first thing is you should both be on the same page. You both need to be committed to it because it can test you a little bit at times.

**Matt:** One of the most important things to consider is you’re not going to feel 100 percent prepared. It’s just something that you have to jump into and figure it out as it goes. Somebody told us, “If you wait for the perfect time, it’s never going to happen.”

**Jen:** We kept going back and forth for a while because I was waiting for a sign or something telling me, “Oh, you’re ready.” That actually didn’t happen.

We just jumped into the foster care and adoption process.

## What are some of the most important things to consider during the adoption process?

**Matt:** Ask lots of questions. Workers are busy, and if you’re not asking them, they aren’t necessarily going to reach out. Even if it’s just asking questions about the process, make sure to contact them.

**Jen:** Get a MARE adoption navigator. I asked ours a lot of questions. We definitely utilized MARE, and I’m not saying that just because I work there. Nobody else knew what we were going through except

somebody who’s already been through the adoption process like the navigators.

## Any other tips?

**Jen:** Learn about and utilize as many resources as you need. We consulted MARE’s Match Support Program and other resources. We knew things wouldn’t be perfect, but by getting advice from others, I’m certain that it made the process go smoother.

# 2020 Michigan Heart Gallery Grand Opening now set for September



The Michigan Heart Gallery Grand Opening has been rescheduled. This year’s gala takes place Sept. 12, 2020 at the Emagine Theater in Royal Oak.

Those are the only details we know for now, but rest assured, we’ll give you the other information later.

Meanwhile, mark your calendar!



## In-Depth Profiles, from page 1

interest in baseball showcased. After preliminary discussions, Michael and staff from MARE and NAWA met at the former Tiger Stadium site, which resulted in MARE’s first In-Depth Profile featured on Mare.org and our social media.

“Michael did such a wonderful job creating his video, you can just see what great energy he has and what a great kid is his through the video,” says Parra. “His video on Facebook was really well received and reached well over 14,000 people.”

The two exchanges have since planned and filmed other In-Depth Profiles including a series of three videos about Dre (C09308), who wanted to feature his writing and dancing talents as well as focus on his story to share with adoptive parents.

“Dre has been waiting for a family for a long time, so he was hesitant



For his In-Depth Profile, Dre (C09308) performed his own choreographed dance routines and his own songs.

about participating,” says MARE Youth Specialist Jennifer Brooks. “However, he decided his desire for a family outweighed his fears, and he went all in on this project and gave it everything he had by choreographing his own dance and writing his own words.”

MARE hopes to continue the momentum for these In-Depth Profiles by working with NAWA over seven months in a project titled “20 in 2020,” which is the number of videos we hope to complete this year.

In the coming weeks, MARE will have a micro-website devoted to

posting these videos along with possible extended narrative information about the featured youth’s interests and their help in the In-Depth Profile process.

## Going In-Depth

MARE has selected youth ages 13-17 years old who are able and desire to play an active role in the In Depth Profile project.

Keep an eye out for future projects involving youth participation in making their own In-Depth Profiles.



# Meet MARE's new adoption navigator

Kimberly Grover is eager to help families on their journey

MARE's newest Adoption Navigator Kimberly Grover had an idea that parenting was like babysitting, and she wanted no part of it.

"I had to be convinced that becoming a parent was a good idea," she says. That convincing happened with the help of her wife, and now the couple has two 9-year-old adopted children.

Now Grover is ready to help other families by drawing on her own experience.

## What's your professional background?

I have a bachelor's degree in fine arts and a master's in social work. Before I got my master's, I worked as a bank teller and custom framer. My other professional experience is with agencies serving children and families such as hospice, community centers and Girl Scouts. Recruitment and volunteer coordination were two of the skills I developed and grew to love in a few of those positions.

## What draws you to child welfare?

I wouldn't say I was drawn to child welfare. It was just



Kimberly Grover and family at Cape Cod.

one path of many that my life has taken. I love the work I have done in the field. I love the work that I'm doing now. I think it will always be a part of what I'm doing with my life.

## What made you interested in becoming an adoption navigator?

Kim Ross, a friend and former coworker, has worked as a MARE adoption navigator for quite a time. She encouraged me to apply. When I read the posting, I knew that this job was such a good fit. The best part is working with my team and all of the other MARE staff. Everyone is funny, nice and accepting.

## What satisfies you most about your job?

I love this job for so many reasons. I enjoy changing the face of foster care and adoption from foster care by helping families reimagine their lives and discover the truth. My job also entails doing things I love such as writing, editing and organizing information.

Contact Kimberly Grover at

[kimberly\\_grover@judsoncenter.org](mailto:kimberly_grover@judsoncenter.org) or 734-330-1454.

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## Calendar of Events

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, MARE has postponed or cancelled Meet & Greets for spring 2020.

MARE also rescheduled the 2020 Michigan Heart Gallery Grand Opening to Sept. 12, 2020. It's still scheduled to take place at the Emagine Theater in

Royal Oak.

For more details, check [Mare.org](http://Mare.org) and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram or contact Jessica Thompson, MARE recruitment specialist: [jessica\\_thompson@judsoncenter.org](mailto:jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org)

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