

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.



YAB is back and better with your help

It's another way to empower the youth on your caseload

We've told youth why they should be on the MARE Youth Advisory Board (UAB), so now we focus on you, the worker.

When youth feel empowered, they are more likely to listen to an adult in their lives, and when youth truly listen, it makes workers' jobs easier. The YAB will empower youth who are available for adoption by giving them the opportunities to give and receive valuable information during regularly scheduled meetings.

To reintroduce this program, youth will have to step forward and attend the meetings, which

means we need your help to recruit youth for the program.

The YAB meetings will include food and an opportunity for youth to win prizes, all while exchanging information on topics such as recruitment efforts, finding resources to help pay for college, special events, feedback for workers and more.

"We want to get their voice on recruitment efforts, how they feel about adoption, ways to get workers to understand what they're going through," says MARE

Youth Specialist Jennifer Brooks. "Let's say we wanted to talk about recruiting for youth. We would bring that topic to them and ask them, 'What are some appropriate ways or your suggestions on ways to approach it?' We would try to get a youth's perspective on a given topic."

At the same time, the YAB meetings give youth the opportunity to suggest topics that they want to learn more about.

"We'll also provide resources for

[See Youth Advisory Board on page 3](#)



Youth had a big influence over the alterations made to the MARE Lifebook including a cover for younger kids and one for teens. With feedback from youth, MARE changed the name "Match Party" to "MARE Meet & Greet."

Helping children find a happy medium in the recruitment media

STORY BY **MARK FISK, MARE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST**

When MARE recently revised the recruitment booklet "Finding Your Forever Family," it sparked an idea that perhaps the children who use it don't understand the implication and importance of the choices they make on their recruitment consent forms.

Take, for instance, this scenario. A sibling group of three needs to be photolisted on the MARE website. Their ages are 9, 12 and 15. They've all expressed a strong desire to stay together in a future forever family, and their adoption team agrees that they should be photolisted as a group on www.mare.org to try to find a family willing to adopt all three.

Since they're all more than 9 years old, they are required to fill out the recruitment consent form. The 9-year-old and 12-year-old show their eagerness for a family by choosing "any" as their recruitment preference; however, the 15-year-old, like many shy teens who still want to be part of a family, is reluctant to be featured in any media, social or otherwise, and indicates "none" as his or her recruitment preference.

This teen's choice means the sibling group can't be featured together in any media, which hinders those who want to recruit for all three together. This scenario underscores the need for workers to present the recruitment consent options carefully.

To do this, one of your best resources is MARE's "Finding Your Forever Family"

Let's Talk About ...
Finding Your Forever Family!

A guide for Michigan youth being featured for adoption recruitment and their adoption workers

**CONFIRMATION OF CONVERSATION
YOUTH ADOPTION RECRUITMENT BOOKLET**
(To be completed by youth ages 9 and up who are being featured for adoption recruitment.)

I, _____, age _____ reviewed the Adoption Worker on _____ Below are my preferences regarding recruitment features:

I PREFER TO BE FEATURED in ANY recruitment activities or

I PREFER NOT TO BE FEATURED in any recruitment activities or

I am only interested in being featured in the following ways:

- Quarterly printed recruitment periodical
- Quarterly newsletter feature (family, professional or youth newsletter)
- Facebook feature
- Twitter feature
- Pinterest
- Recruitment video on MARE website
- Heart Gallery display
- Newspaper article/feature
- Television Spotlight
- MARE promotional materials (calendar, fliers, posters)
- Faith Community Outreach (prayer cards, bulletin features)
- Other suggestions: _____

This form is valid for one (1) year from the date signed.

Youth Signature _____ Date _____

Worker Signature _____ Date _____

Please send completed form to MARE at:
3840 Packard Road, Suite 170, Ann Arbor, MI 48108
or fax to 734-794-2962.

recruitment booklet. Its target audience is waiting youth, but workers can use it as a reference tool as well. The booklet explains the photolisting process as well as the individual recruitment options.

When presenting youth with the recruitment options, make sure to explain how different media appeal to various audiences. For instance, Facebook, Twitter and newspaper websites reach a much broader audience than MARE's newsletters and periodicals.

They all reach adoptive parents, but the social media and newspaper websites have the potential to reach even more. Also, assure youth that MARE staff members monitor their information on social media and websites to make sure that no objectionable material gets posted to it.

If you would like copies of the revised recruitment booklet, contact MARE at 800-589-6273 or go to www.mare.org > Worker Forms > Forms.

RECRUITMENT? WHAT'S THAT?

Every child deserves a family to make that happen, families that want to adopt need to know which kids are waiting for homes. The internet and print ad material are great ways for these families to see information about children ready for adoption.

Recruitment also gets more people to think about adopting children.

What is Adoption?

Adoption is a legal way for parents to take a child into their family. Children who are adopted become a permanent part of the family just as if they had been born into that family.

Save the date!



We're still working on the details, but the 2017 Michigan Heart Gallery will debut at the Emagine Theaters in Royal Oak on April 29. The event will feature a special video, luncheon and more. At last year's grand opening, Michael and Marshall got a chance to meet 2015 Miss Michigan Emily Kieliszewski. In fact, Michael, who since then has been matched with a family, was one of the stars of the 2016 Michigan Heart Gallery video shown at the grand opening.

Youth Advisory Board from page 1

youth who come to the meetings," says Brooks. "We want to know if we can provide any more assistance. We want to bring a new topic each time we meet, but we also want to find out, 'What are the topics that they feel are important?'"

In addition to the information, food and possible prizes at the meetings, Brooks outlined a few other reasons why youth will want to attend.

"Somebody at the meeting may have faced an issue that another hasn't," says Brooks. "They're a community, those youth. They will want to make sure that somebody from their community is speaking up for them."

By gathering information from youth who are or who have been in foster care and available for adoption, MARE can educate adoption workers and officials about the concerns of youth waiting for an adoptive family.

For now, YAB is starting in Wayne County with the goal of expanding to other regions in the state. Initially, the meetings will occur on a quarterly basis but could become monthly if the need arises.

These meetings will be run by MARE staff with the help

of others. If you want to establish a Youth Advisory Board in your area, MARE would like to partner with you.

Facts About Youth Advisory Board

Participants: Youth in foster care who are available for adoption.

Meetings: Starting in Wayne County but will expand to other regions.

Who to contact: If you have youth on your caseload who would be interested in joining the Youth Advisory Board or if you want more information, contact Jennifer Brooks at 734-528-2061 or Jennifer_brooks@judsoncenter.org.

YAB Mission Statement

Providing a safe space for youth with experience in foster care to connect, receive resources, and learn to take an active role in their permanency goal while helping to shape the adoption and recruitment process for all of Michigan's waiting youth.

How about a round of applause for a wonderful worker?

Chelsea Dalenburg champions the cause for children

The MARE team respects and admires Michigan's adoption specialists for the amazing work they do for our waiting youth, and we wanted to find a new way to recognize and celebrate those who demonstrate outstanding quality social work in adoption.

Starting today, each issue of the Professional Provider Newsletter will feature an adoption specialist nominated by a MARE staff for an Exceptional Recruitment Award. The feature will highlight how the specialist's actions demonstrated their incredible commitment to finding a forever family for every youth. The work of adoptions is not always easy, and we hope this new column will inspire and energize every adoption specialist who partners with MARE. Now let's meet our first Exceptional Recruitment Award winner ...

We want to award Chelsea Dalenberg for going above and beyond for the children on her caseload who were scheduled for a MARE recruitment video. Chelsea showed excellence by prepping the children with the interview questions and making sure they looked appropriate for their video.



Not only did Chelsea make sure the children were prepared and ready for their video shoot, she drove all four of them to the filming location!

What's important to know is that these children were not all in the same area. Chelsea spent many hours in the car to make sure the

children could make it to the video shoot even if they were hours away. She played their favorite music, helped with their interviews and even got them ice cream afterwards.

Thank you Chelsea for your exceptional work! All these steps help smooth the video process and makes it fun for the kids.

Calling new workers: These training sessions are for you

Once a month, MARE Adoption Worker Liaison Martha Kaczala conducts Child Welfare Institute training sessions for new workers either in Detroit or Lansing.

These sessions are part of the training required by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. During these sessions, new workers will learn their responsibilities for registering



youth on www.mare.org and review MARE-specific MDHHS Adoption Services Manual policies. In addition, workers will learn the helpful features that MARE's website offers.

For information, contact Martha Kaczala at 734-528-2007 or email her at martha_kaczala@judsoncenter.org.