



# MARE news

Newsletter of the *Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange, Inc. (MARE)*

Finding adoptive homes for children in foster care with YOUR help since 1957

Winter 2011-2012

## 149 Leaps of Faith Celebrated on National Adoption Day

**A**nn and Nelson Woodfork adopted their baby daughter 30 years ago, when their sons were 5 and 7. These social workers, who've spent their careers working with children, thought about adopting again, but it was never the "right time," and there were always so many good reasons not to. But Ann kept reading Sunday's Child in the Boston Globe and watching *Wednesday's Child* on WBZ-TV—she wanted to take every child! Finally, 2 ½ years ago, she read about a teenage boy in the Boston Globe. "I tore out the column," she remembers, "and started the campaign to convince Nelson that the time was finally right to adopt again. There is never really a right time. But there were kids waiting and we both decided we should give a teenager a home - because we could. Trust me, convincing

**We all took a leap of faith, which is exactly what adoption is.**

*Ann Woodfork*

**We understood and we all worked together to address his concerns.** Needless to say, we all took the leap of faith, which is exactly what adoption is." And on November 18, Ann & Nelson adopted Shicoren during Boston's National Adoption Day celebrations. "He has made a fantastic adjustment to the family and our community. He is a great young man. And of course, he drives us crazy on occasion, but we also drive him crazy, I'm sure! **But that is what families do.**"

"We hope our story inspires people to adopt a teenager," Ann adds. "As Martin Luther King once said, "Take the first step in faith – you don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step."

Massachusetts' 9th National Adoption Day on November 18 saw the adoption of 149 children from state foster care in seven courthouses - Pittsfield, Hadley, Springfield, Worcester, Boston, Salem, and Brockton. **The adopted children ranged in age from 10 months to 19 years old, 79 boys and 70 girls.** Twenty-three sibling groups were adopted together, including 20 groups of two, two groups of 3, and one group of four siblings! They were adopted into 120 different families.

Community leaders participating in ceremonies at the different courthouses included Lt. Governor Tim Murray, an adoptive dad himself, Boston City Councillor Tito Jackson, WBZ-TV's Jack Williams, Jordan's Furniture's Eliot Tatelman, Chief Justice Roderick Ireland, and adoptive families and youth statewide.

National Adoption Day ceremonies were held in all 50 states, with the goal of raising awareness of adoption from foster care to recruit more potential parents.



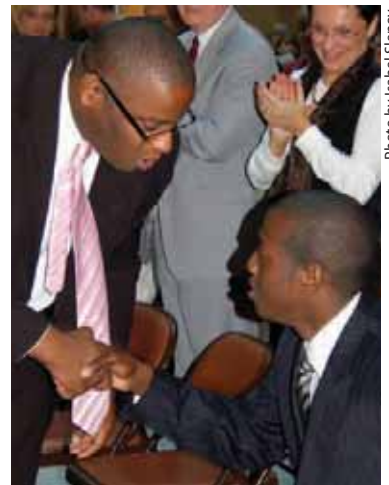
Nelson, 17 ½ year-old Shicoren, and Ann

the teen Ann read about was ultimately not a good match for their family, they soon learned about Shicoren, then 15. His Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter at MARE, Deirdre Madden, had reviewed the Woodfork's homestudy for another teen, and recognized their potential for Shicoren.

Nelson was hard, but convincing our children and friends was even harder. We are supposed to be retiring, not taking in a teenager!"

They completed the MAPP training and homestudy. While

"When we found Shicoren," Ann says, "we knew it was right. We were ready to proceed, but Shicoren's social worker, who had worked with him for years, was at first not so sure it was the right fit. And Shicoren was also not so sure because he had a great foster mom.



Boston City Councillor Tito Jackson congratulated Shicoren at Boston's National Adoption Day.



DCF Regional Supervisor Nancy Kinder created artwork with handprints of every child adopted in Brockton.

Más AYUDA para las Familias Latinas Pg. 2

## Karen Seif Joins MARE's Board of Directors



MARE is thrilled to welcome Karen Seif, LICSW, to our Board of Directors. Karen has many years of clinical experience with children and families in a variety of settings, including adoption and foster care. She and her partner are also the proud adoptive parents of two wonderful and spirited pre-teen boys.

Most recently, Karen has worked at the Boston-based Home for Little Wanderers, conducting child adoption assessments and adoption home studies. While at the agency, she designed and co-facilitated an educational support group for youth adopted through foster care into LGBT-headed families. She also conducted trainings for social service agencies on the complex needs of LGBT youth. Karen brings her experience and expertise in this field to MARE's newly formed *LGBT Focus Committee*, which has the goal of expanding outreach to LGBT communities throughout Massachusetts.

## MARE Welcomes Second AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer



Annessa Lewis joined the MARE staff this month, as a member of MARE's PR & Fundraising team. As MARE's second full-time AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, Annessa will spend the next year expanding MARE's outreach to the business community and their employees.

Annessa joins us after a year and a half at the U.S. Census Bureau, where she worked as an office automation clerk most recently on the "American Housing Survey." Annessa has a BA in Sociology from Smith College.

**Can your company spread the word about foster care adoption to its employees? Email [Alewis@MAREinc.org](mailto:Alewis@MAREinc.org)!**

## More Help for Latino Families

Are you a Latino family feeling lost in the adoption process? Have you registered with MARE but need to update your information? If so, we encourage you to get in touch with Felix Vega, a volunteer who joined MARE this Fall. Felix is updating our database of Latino families interested in adoption as part of MARE's Family Support Services



program. Felix is organizing this project in collaboration with Ricardo Franco, MARE's Latino Child & Family Services Coordinator, so that MARE can assist Latino families through the adoption process more effectively. Felix has experience working with the Latino community in the United States and in Puerto Rico and now lives in Roxbury, MA. Thank you very much, Felix! Call Felix or Ricardo at 617-54-ADOPT.

## Más AYUDA para las Familias Latinas

¿Es usted miembro de una familia Latina y se siente perdido en el proceso de adopción? ¿Se ha comunicado con MARE en el pasado pero necesita actualizar su información? Si ese es su caso le invitamos a ponerse en contacto con FELIX VEGA, un nuevo voluntario que se unió a MARE este otoño. Felix está actualizando nuestra base de datos de las familias Latinas interesadas en el proceso de adopción como parte del programa de Apoyo a las Familias. Felix está trabajando en colaboración con Ricardo Franco Coordinador de Servicios para niños y familias Latinas en MARE. Felix tiene experiencia trabajando con la comunidad Latina en Estados Unidos y en Puerto Rico y actualmente vive en Roxbury, MA. Muchas gracias Felix! Llame a Felix o a Ricardo al 617-542-3678

## MARE Staff

**Lisa K. Funaro**  
*Executive Director*

**Maurine Albano**  
*Child Services Coordinator*  
*Western Mass.*

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**AmeriCorps VISTA Members**  
*Annessa Lewis*  
*Sarah Stevenson*

*MARE news* is published three times a year by the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange, Inc. (MARE).

MARE is a private, non-profit agency founded in 1957 to find "a permanent place to call HOME" for CHILDREN waiting in foster care, including sibling groups and children who are traditionally harder to place. We do this by recruiting, educating, supporting and advocating for FAMILIES throughout the adoption process.

Please direct inquiries or comments to:

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800-882-1176 TTY: 617-542-7772  
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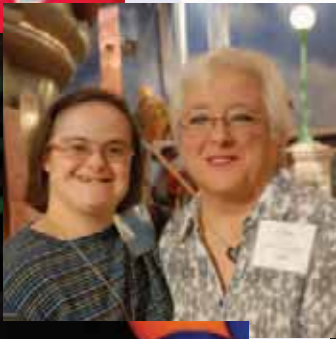
*MARE is funded in part by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF)*

# Wednesday's Child Alumni & Friends Celebrate 30 Years

Hundreds of Wednesday's Child families and friends marked the 30th Anniversary of the Wednesday's Child program with a party at Jordan's Furniture, Reading on November 6. Wednesday's Child alumni vividly remembered Jack Williams, the friendly man with the microphone, who gave them a few minutes of attention, and a whole lot of hope. Luis Carmody, featured in the early 90's, thanked Jack for being his friend, his mentor, and his guardian angel. Patty Upshaw, featured in the 2000s, remembered picking cherries. And Al Spittler, one of the first Wednesday's Children in 1981, showed off his own growing family. DCF Commissioner Angelo McClain thanked Jack, WBZ, the social workers who brought children to outings to be interviewed, and the families who called. MARE's Executive Director Lisa Funaro reminisced about anxiously waiting that first night, hoping the phones would ring. But thanks to the historic collaboration of DCF, WBZ-TV, MARE, and Jack Williams, the phones are still ringing for children who need families.



Photos by Judith Halperin & Patricia Basha



Thank you to Eliot Tatelman, Jordan's Furniture, Montilio's Bakery, DCF Central Office, and the Jack & Marci Williams Endowment for Wednesday's Child, who helped make this celebration possible.

Thank you to DCF, WBZ, the museums & businesses who've hosted the interviews, and the families who call - for making the Wednesday's Child features so successful.

**And finally, thank you to Jack Williams, whose unwavering commitment has helped find families for over 600 Wednesday's Children.**

# MARE Applauds Workers Who Go Above and Beyond

To kick off National Adoption Month, MARE invited social workers on November 1 to an afternoon awards reception at the Barton Center in Oxford, MA to recognize them for their ongoing efforts and hard work during the past year. Workers and MARE staff enjoyed a tasty dessert & appetizer buffet, and the chance to visit with colleagues in a relaxed setting.

## **Congratulations to these Honorees for a year of outstanding collaboration**

### **Outstanding Number of MARE-Assisted Placements**

DCF Dimock Area Office \* Children's Friend

### **Outstanding Use of MARE Registration & Photolisting**

DCF New Bedford Area Office \* Child & Family Services, Merrimack Valley

### **Outstanding Use of MARE Family Resource Collaboration**

DCF Northern Regional ADLU \* Cambridge Family and Children's Service

### **Outstanding MARE Adoption Party Attendance**

DCF Western Regional ADLU \* DCF Holyoke Area Office  
Casey Family Services \* Lisa Darrigo - DCF Lowell Area Office

### **Outstanding Use of MARE Media Campaigns**

DCF Springfield Area Office \* Child and Family Services of Fall River

### **Wendy's Wonderful Kids Award**

Janell Cash, Springfield Area Off. \* Jennifer Murphy, Salem/Cape Ann Area Off.

### **Beyond Borders Interstate Placement Award**

DCF Holyoke Area Office

### **Outstanding Dedication & Commitment to Children & Families**

Gina Arigo, Communities for People \* Michelle Gordon, DCF Central Office  
Sharon Thomas, North Region ADLU \* Anthony Solari, DCF Lawrence Area Off.  
Crystel Feliciano, Children's Friend \* Tina Cawley, DCF Hyannis Area Office

### **Outstanding Sustained Dedication & Commitment to Waiting Children**

Laurie Anastopoulos, DCF Dimock Area Off.  
Jaime Caron, DCF West Regional ADLU  
Margot Crawford, DCF Worcester East Area Off.  
Sharon Deacon, DCF Lawrence Area Off.

Stephanie Frankel, DCF Metro Regional ADLU

Chris O'Shea, Children's Friend

Lynda Page, Child & Family Services Merrimack Valley

Susan Rooney, Cambridge Family & Children's Services

Eileen Griffin, DCF Leominster Area Off.

### **Mid-Lifetime Achievement Award**

Lynda Page, formerly of Child & Family Services of Merrimack Valley

### **Outstanding Agency Collaboration with MARE**

DCF Southeast Regional ADLU

DCF Lynn Area Office

Children's Friend



MARE's Director of Child and Family Services, Bridget Chiaruttini, presents staff of the Dimock/Hyde Park Area Office with their award for outstanding number of MARE assisted placements.

## **MARE Publicity hits DOT and MBTA**

National Adoption Month saw new publicity campaigns promoting adoption from foster care. Thanks to MASSDOT (the Mass. Department of Transportation) and outreach by MARE's VISTA member Sarah Stevenson, MARE & DCF received Public Service Announcements on electronic highway billboards on I-90 in Chicopee, Rt 1 Foxboro, Rt 195 in Fall River & New Bedford, Rt 495 in Lawrence, and I-93 in Medford & Stoneham. Many thanks to Mass. DOT, DCF, & EOHHS for making this happen.



At the same time, MBTA Orange Line riders saw advertising encouraging them to "Change a child's life. And yours. Adopt. Donate. Help." These very

visible ads are already generating phone calls - we hope they'll soon lead to more adoptions!



**Eddie's in foster care, waiting for adoption**

MARE (Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange) finds adoptive homes for kids like Eddie.

**Change a child's life. And yours. Adopt Donate Help**

www.MAREinc.org 617-54-ADOPT



MARE coordinates *Wednesday's Child* on WRZ-TV, *Sunday's Child* in the Boston Globe, and more, with the state Department of Children & Families, to recruit and help potential parents adopt youth in state foster care. Hundreds of local children are waiting for adoption.



## *Samantha is waiting*



Samantha (Reg. #3594)

no matter what type of outdoor game is being played, Sam will eagerly join in the fun. Her favorite sports include basketball and soccer. When she cannot be outdoors, Samantha enjoys making bead necklaces and other arts & crafts projects.

With a bright smile and an infectious laugh, Sam's love for animals shines through when she has the opportunity to be around them. Her favorites are pigs, dogs and horses. She hopes to work with animals when she gets older.

*Learn more about Samantha. Call 617-54-ADOPT.*

## Adoption Parties & Info Events – Interactive Activities for Adults, Children AND Teens

MARE organized 6 Adoption Parties/Information Events over the past few months, with an eye towards making these events more fun for all the youth, and more effective for all the adults.

The **Southbridge adoption party** included a rock-climbing wall, a big hit with teens (and younger kids, too). The **Ironstone Farm therapeutic horseback riding party**, for a small group of youth and homestudied families, helped the youth, adults, and social workers make meaningful connections.

And the **Jordan's Furniture Adoption Option party**, with over 800 in attendance, featured two tracks. Adults already homestudied connected directly with children and their workers about matches. Families just beginning to learn about adoption attended an IMAX overview about the process and began general conversations with different workers. Feedback has been excellent, with few families (or social workers) feeling overwhelmed by the crowds.

MARE continues to fine-tune these events, including hosting **our first post-party WEBINAR**, to help more families and children find their matches.



Richie, 15, meets Eliot Tatelman at the Jordan's Furniture 'Adoption Option' party in September



Photo by Amy Yanover



Photos by Steve Briggs

(Left): Princess, 13, enjoys the horseback riding at the Ironstone Farm adoption party.

(Above) Lanaisha, 6, and Jonathan, 10, try their hands at rock-climbing at the November 5 adoption party in Southbridge.

## “No Such Thing as an Unwanted Child, Just an Unfound Family”

*Wendy's Wonderful Kids* recruitment model proves success in increasing adoption rates

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA) has released remarkable research that illustrates just how effective a child-focused recruitment strategy is in finding adoptive families for youth in foster care. A five-year study conducted by Child Trends for the Foundation found that children served by DTFA's signature program, Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK), experienced significantly higher rates of adoption than children not served by the model. The WWK program provides local adoption agencies with grants to hire adoption recruiters who spend 100 percent of their job focused on finding forever families for waiting children, particularly older children and children with mental health issues.



Here are some highlights from the research:

- Children in foster care served by WWK recruiters are more than 1.7 times more likely to be adopted.
- For older children, the impact of the WWK model is even greater: for children referred to WWK at age 8, the likelihood of adoption was one-and-one-half times higher; for children referred at age 11, the likelihood was two times higher; and for children referred at age 15, the likelihood of adoption was three times higher.
- Children with mental health issues served by WWK are three times more likely to find forever families than those not served by WWK.

MARE is proud to be a Wendy's Wonderful Kids grant recipient for six years, now with two full-time Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters - Lindsey Brynjolfsson in Western MA and Deirdre Madden in Eastern MA. Lindsey's and Deirdre's child recruitment success stories bring to life the Foundation's research and show that truly, no child is “unadoptable.”

## **"Do Everything You Can," say Mama K & Mama Ray**

**Determination, flexibility, and a friendly positive attitude have turned Kristin and Ray into proud moms now known as "Mama K" and "Mama Ray."**

The newly married, newly suburban homeowners turned to adoption from foster care in 2008 to expand their family. "We felt strongly," Kristin says, "that there are so many children - kids right down the street or in our own neighborhood - who needed families." They decided to adopt a sibling group.

Once homestudied, Kristin and Ray took on the search for a sibling group with determination. "We were very active," Kristin says. "We had the attitude *We decided to do this, so let's do it!* They trekked to the library each month to see the new children in MARE's Photolisting book. They attended adoption parties, bringing copies of their family profile to hand out to every social worker they met.

**"We took advantage of every resource available to us for matching,"** Kristin emphasizes. "I think a lot of people are nervous to talk to social workers, but it can't hurt to put yourself out there. That way, maybe when they have a new child, they'll remember your family because you were friendly and enthusiastic."

Kristin feels that this sort of friendly determination is the reason that the social worker for a 2 ½ year-old named Joey gave Kristin and Ray a call. Though not part of a sibling group, Joey seemed like a great fit for their family and Kristin and Ray began visits with him.

That positive friendliness carried through into their relationship with Joey's foster parents Betty and Steven, nicknamed *Nana* and *Bomba*. From the beginning, Betty and Steven were extremely welcoming, showing Kristin and Ray how they had cared for Joey during his stay. Kristin explains that "what could have been a potentially uncomfortable relationship was one of the great things that came out of our adoption journey."

As Kristin and Ray visited with Betty and Steven and got close to Joey, they also became attached to Lucas, another little guy Nana and Bomba were foster-parenting. Joey and Lucas were 14 months apart and had developed a brotherly bond—but Lucas' goal was not adoption. Joey moved in with Kristin and Ray in May, 2009. And the Mamas, who had wanted to adopt a sibling group, who knew that Joey and Lucas needed to maintain their brotherly connection, got the happy call a month later — Lucas' goal had just changed to adoption. He moved in two months later.

The adjustment to a pre-adoptive placement with both boys in the summer of 2009 was the trickiest transition for their family. It was a blessing to have the boys together, Kristin explains, but visits with both sets of birth parents, and the emotional roller coaster of Joey's and Lucas' "legal-risk" status was challenging. It was impossible to imagine that either, or both boys would be removed from their home.



Kristin, Ray, Joey & Lucas' Heart Gallery Family portrait

Kristin and Ray's advice during this potentially difficult placement period is to reach out to your closest supports: "We leaned on each other, our extended families, and we were able to lean on the boys' foster family. They were with us every step of the way," Kristin remembers.

**"Do everything you can!"** they both urge. "Talk to as many people as you can, go to support groups, prepare each other and get your household ready for the transition."

Kristin explains that though it was difficult, she tried to adopt Ray's "trust that things will be OK," attitude.

And they were! On 8/25/10, both Joey's and Lucas' adoptions were finalized. Despite the challenges, Mama K and Mama Ray both agree that adopting their boys was "the best decision we've ever made."

Mama K, Mama Ray, Joey and Lucas have proudly participated in MARE's 2010 and 2011 Walk for Adoption with about thirty of their nearest and dearest. Both years they have hosted a big family barbeque at their house after the event.

"The Walk gives us the chance once a year to **celebrate our family** and how adoption brought us together."

**MARE's 3<sup>rd</sup> Walk for Adoption**  
*A Walk Home*  
**Sunday, May 20, 2012**



A family-friendly 5-K at  
**Jordan's Furniture in E. Taunton**

Celebrate adoption! Get your team together for a fun morning of walking, entertainment, refreshments and prizes to raise awareness and funds for adoption from foster care! Sponsors & Corporate Teams welcome!

**Join the Walk or plan your own local Walk for Adoption.**

**Registration opens soon at  
[www.firstgiving.com/MARE](http://www.firstgiving.com/MARE)**

# Thank you - YOUR donations help match children with families!

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We have made our best efforts to include donors of \$50+ from 7/1/11 to 10/31/11. Please let us know of any errors.

## CAR DONATION

Hurry to get that 2011 tax deduction - worth a minimum of \$500 (or more)

Donate your car, truck, motorcycle or boat!

Call 866-962-3678 for details and FREE towing.

## Business & Foundation Donors

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Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption  
United Way of Tri-County, Inc.  
Westgate Mall

A special thank you to the **Jack Williams Endowment for Wednesday's Child** for the \$50,000 grant for MARE's operations in FY2011!



## National Adoption Day Donors

Thank you to the following who donated items statewide, so that every Massachusetts child adopted during National Adoption Day ceremonies would receive a special gift-bag:

TJX Companies Inc. Jockey Being Family

Learning Express Toy Stores of Mansfield, Bellingham & Westborough  
Nestle's Inc. Yomega Corporation

Thank you to North Regional Adoption Supervisor **Stephanie Frankel**, for coordinating so many donations.

And thank you to dozens of organizations and individuals who made donations to their local national Adoption Day ceremonies

## Upcoming Events

**A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS**  
**Wednesday, December 21**

Tune in to CBS, 8:00 p.m.



*A Home for the Holidays* shares, through the eyes of a child formerly in foster care, the joy of having a family - not just for the holidays, but forever. Hosting the show will be country superstar Martina McBride. The special will feature performances by pop superstar **Justin Bieber**, **Mary J. Blige**, **Christina Perri**, and **Gavin DeGraw**.

Visit [www.MAREinc.org](http://www.MAREinc.org) and click **EVENTS** for updates!

## Change a Child's Life

### Family

Could you grow up without one?



Dear Friend,

Is your holiday appeal sitting in a pile? You can still help - please donate this holiday season to support MARE's work to find homes for youngsters in state foster care.

While times are tough for everyone, we can't give up on the children who need our help most.

YOU can make a difference. Visit [www.MAREinc.org](http://www.MAREinc.org) to make an online donation today.

Thank you.



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*Wishing you Happy Homes and Holidays!*

## Change a child's life. And yours.

### *Lisha is waiting*



Lisha (Reg.#4491)

Lisha is a 12 year old girl of Dominican heritage. Although Lisha learned to speak English only five short years ago, no one would ever know! She speaks Spanish and English fluently.

Lisha is friendly and kind and considers herself to be "easy to talk to." She loves to sing, read, and socialize with her friends. Lisha likes to please others

and puts others' needs before her own, but she is working to be more assertive. Lisha does well in school where she receives reading and language support. She enjoys reading and is building her confidence to read aloud in class. She aspires to go to college someday.

Learn more about Lisha. Call 617-54-ADOPT.

### *Jeffrey is waiting*



Jeffrey (Reg # 3307)

Jeffrey is a friendly and outgoing ten year old young man of Hispanic descent. With a healthy sense of humor, Jeffrey likes making people laugh. He loves playing video games, as well as basketball and baseball. Jeffrey likes learning new things, and hopes to learn karate. He likes to draw, do arts and crafts and watch television and movies.

Jeffrey resides in a foster home where he is doing well and where he gets along with the other children in the home. Meeting with similar success in school, Jeffrey benefits from being part of a therapeutic school setting.

Learn more about Jeffrey. Call 617-54-ADOPT.