

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.



When parenting becomes an aversion, try a little diversion

STORY BY **DORENE JONES, MARE ADOPTION NAVIGATOR**

Fostering and/or adopting a child out of foster care can take a toll on you emotionally, which can lead to stress.

Some early signs of stress include fatigue, headache, difficulty sleeping or concentrating, irritability and an upset stomach. When stress becomes long term and you don't address it, it can lead to other more serious health conditions such as high blood pressure, depression, asthma or arthritis flare-ups, heart attack and ulcers, just to name a few.

Even though you can't eliminate stress from your daily life, you can practice some stress management techniques. So with the adage "to be able to help anyone else, you have to take care of yourself" in mind, here are a few ways to manage your stress.

1. Exercise. I know many of you have just said, "UGH!" But did you know that exercise and other physical activities produce endorphins – chemicals in the brain that act as natural painkillers? Plus exercise improves your ability to sleep, which in turn reduces stress. Do you have any exercise goals? If not, make a plan today. Since the weather is getting nicer, take a walk.

2. Eat Properly — What Should You Eat? Try low-fat, high-fiber, carbohydrate-rich meals with plenty of fruits and vegetables. They soothe you without sapping your energy and give you the nutrients you need to boost your immune system. Avoid sugar, caffeine and high-fat foods.

3. Journaling. Do you blog or journal? Many believe that writing about stressful events helps you come to terms with them, which in turn reduces the impact of these

stressors on your physical health.

4. Join a Support Group. There are many in our state. Or you can even join an online group. For information about support groups, visit <http://afsn.org/services/foster-adoptive-and-kinship-support-groups-by-county>

5. Ask for Respite Care. Don't be afraid to ask for help. You need a rest!

6. Family Fun. When you do fun things with your kids, you ALL feel better. We need to schedule this more often! Play a board game, ride bikes, go to the library, plant a garden ... whatever your family likes to do. Make FUN a priority.

7. Massage. I get tension headaches when I'm stressed and can feel it in my shoulders and neck. Where do you feel stress? Perhaps put a little money away each month, or use a Groupon to get a massage on a regular basis! (Groupon offers them often at a huge discount.)

8. Yoga and/or Meditation. Studies show that yoga may help reduce stress and anxiety. It can also enhance your mood and overall sense of well-being. If you don't want to take a class, then buy a DVD or look up "yoga" on YouTube. They have some really good videos.

9. Music. Add music to your life. Music has a relaxing effect on our minds and bodies, especially slow, quiet classical music. If you play an instrument, and haven't done so in a while, pick it up again!

10. Acceptance. Learn to accept your child. When you can accept your child, for where he/she is, you will better be able to cope with his/her behaviors.



Tips to form a strong support network

STORY BY JENNIFER L JACKSON, MARE MARE MATCH SUPPORT SPECIALIST

It's only Tuesday and you have handled several therapeutic appointments, caseworker contacts and received a phone call from the school detailing your child's inappropriate behaviors. Your child has been defiant, angry, distracted and constantly bickering with siblings and the intensity of the week has struck you. You may feel angry, sad, discouraged and absolutely alone.

When days are difficult, we need emotional and practical support from our network of supportive relationships. Sometimes we are reluctant to reach out to family or friends as we

feel they just won't understand. But there are many benefits to having these supportive relationships, such as knowing people who can provide you with information, advice, guidance, or those who will lend an ear.

It may seem obvious to contact a partner, friend, parent, sibling or other family member, but who else is in your support network that you can rely on? A supportive contact is one who will listen to what you are saying, provide feedback and suggestions if desired, or someone who just "gets it." Perhaps it is your neighbor, church leader, colleague, caseworker or counselor.

Other opportunities to expand your network include volunteering, participating in a group sport, joining a book club, or expanding your efforts to meet your new neighbors. There are online forums, Facebook support groups, and local support groups. Attend the support group meetings and volunteer to assist with coordinating events.

There are remarkable benefits to having a network of supportive relationships including better health and decreased stress. You can never have too much support, so expand your network by getting involved and don't be afraid to ask for help.

The red carpet at the 2016 Michigan Heart Gallery Grand Opening on April 16 turned out to be magic



"Life is a box of chocolates, Forrest."



"I'll be back."



"Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."



"May the force be with you."



"If you build it, he will come."

Pictured clockwise from top left, Lakenyei (C06085), Adoptive Parent Ken, Parris (C08529), Andrew (C08794) and Marvin (C05587)
Photos by MARE Communications Specialist Hannah Dunne

Where: Renewal Church
11174 East 13 Mile Rd
Warren, MI 48093

When: Saturday
May 21, 2016
9:00-4:00

Foster and Adoptive Parent Conference

Presented by
MARE Adoption Navigators

Keynote Speaker - Author Julian Goodson
"Thoughts from a Foster Dad"

A1- Parenting Teens
A2- Openness in Adoption
A3- Building Your Support Network

Lunch Speaker - Tamara Gabourie- (Foster and Adoptive Parent) sharing her story of adoption)

B1- How Many Times Must I tell You
B2- Parenting the Traumatized Child
B3- Self Care

General Closing Session - The Secret to Raising Productive and Resilient Children

REGISTER:

<https://mareparentconference2016.eventbrite.com>

Light Breakfast and Lunch Provided
Limited Child Care Available
Training Hours Given for Sessions Attended



www.mare.org
1-800-589-6273

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Cody (C08935) likes playing basketball as well as listening to Christian rap music.

On the sidelines too long, Cody hopes to join a family's lineup

Cody uses exercise as a way to keep his life running smoothly. He especially loves cross-fit training and tries to do it often. Cody stays active by playing sports such as football and basketball with peers on a regular basis.

When the 14-year-old wants to relax, he listens to Christian rap music. Described as mature for his age, Cody comes off as a shy young man until he warms up to people. His worker describes Cody as "a very sweet young man." Cody describes himself as a loyal friend, good listener and hard worker. He says he wants to improve in every way, and his worker says he's already progressed with that goal.

"Cody is a unique individual and has grown so much in the last year," she says.

Another worker says Cody is a "completely different young

man than when he first came to us." She adds that Cody has "a lot of potential for success with the right family willing to adopt him."

Cody would do best in a forever family with two parents who can give him the supervision and support that he needs to function at his best. His family should be active since Cody uses exercise as an emotional outlet. Cody's family must be understanding and patient with him, especially as he transitions into his new home.

His forever family also must be willing to continue the services that will help Cody thrive at home and in school. Cody has stated a preference for a family who lives in a rural area. Finally, the family must be willing to let Cody maintain his relationship with his younger siblings.

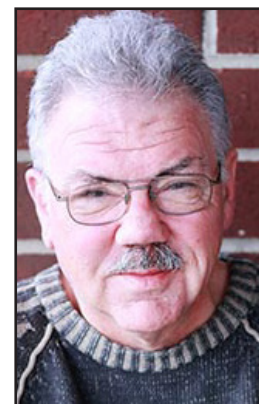
Mac really does live the dream

And he's a big asset for adoptive families

After meeting his wife, Helen, and moving to the United States in 2001, Mac Ballantine had two goals: one was to become an American citizen, which he proudly accomplished in June of 2008, and the other was to adopt a child in need and bring her into his family's life, which Mac and Helen did later that same year when they adopted their teenage daughter.

Mac had a great deal of experience working with teens as a hockey coach and referee for 15 years.

"I always knew that someday we would adopt," says Mac. "My family had been foster parents for years in Canada, and my great grandfather had been an orphan who had been sent to Canada as a child, so adopting was something that was a natural thing to us."



MARE Adoption Navigator Mac Ballantine

After adopting his daughter, Mac's interest in helping others grew, and he became the leader of a support group for foster and adoptive parents. Because of his leadership and advocacy, he was invited by the North American Council on Adoptable Children to travel to Washington, D.C., to meet with lawmakers and share his perspective on older child adoption.

"I have continued to advocate for older child adoption," says Mac, "and when I was offered a chance to become an Adoption Navigator it was a 'Dream Position' for me. Suddenly I had a chance to help many people achieve a dream, and also it was a chance to give back and use my experiences so that others may experience the joys of adopting that my wife and I have had."

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 14, 2016

MARE Meet & Greet, Plymouth
11 a.m.-2 p.m.

*Registration is at 10:30am

May 21, 2016

Foster & Adoptive Parent Conference, Warren
11 a.m.-2 p.m.

*Registration is 9-10 a.m.

July 31 2016

Adoption Day at Comerica Park

1:10 p.m., Detroit Tigers vs. Houston Astros

Link to purchase tickets: <http://m.mlb.com/det/tickets/info/special-ticket-packages#adoption>

For more information regarding these events please contact Jessica Thompson, MARE Recruitment Specialist: jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org

