

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 children, visit our website at www.mare.org.



A testimonial for the success of the In-Depth Profiles

MARE plans to keep doing the In-Depth Profiles (IDPs) for youth that began with last year's 20 in 2020 project, and the experience of Renee Jennings shows why the effort should continue.

The adoption specialist for Child Safe Michigan attributes a recent match of one of the youth on her caseload with an adoptive family to the IDP program. Jennings says the teen youth had been featured in a number of ways in the four years that he's been on Mare.org.

"He's been out there," she says. "We've done countless Meet & Greets; we've done it all. For this IDP to just come out and do something quickly, I think it was a huge help."

How did this IDP come about?

It was actually a fluke. I made a little bio for our Facebook page, and it caught the attention of (MARE Recruitment Specialist) Jessica Thompson, who reached out to me, then contacted the people for the IDP. It took off as soon as Jessica saw the Facebook post. Probably less than an hour after he was up on our end, we were preparing for the IDP.

What was your role in the IDP?

It was a team effort. I heard about the IDP program but wasn't certain if it was going to proceed because of the pandemic. Once Jessie contacted me, I let her know of this youth's interest, and she brought (MARE Youth Specialist) Jennifer Brooks in to help. She was amazing and worked well with my youth. MARE and the youth did all the hard work.



Renee Jennings:

"We've done countless Meet & Greets; we've done it all. For this IDP to just come out and do something quickly, I think it was a huge help."

Why do you think the IDP was effective for this youth?

He had been on MARE for four years, and I had been his adoption worker for two, and there really weren't any inquiries on him. He had a cute picture on his MARE profile, but I thought that if he could open up about his interests in a video, that would catch the eye of adoptive parents and help them connect, which it did. You really have to meet him to get to know him.

Do you have any advice for other workers regarding IDPs?

Utilize it. Utilize it. Utilize it. Again I just think it was a cool way to get this youth introduced to parents, and I think it helped tremendously. It's a great recruitment tool, especially for our older youth.

If you have questions about MARE's future plans for IDPs or you want to suggest a youth, contact Jennifer Brooks at 734-528-2061 or email jennifer_brooks@judsoncenter.org



Shelby



Sierra



Kristine



Erin

Match Support introduces new staff

MARE's Match Support Program (MSP) has been adding new faces to its team over the past several months, and we are excited to introduce them!

Shelby, Sierra and Kristine are new Match Support specialists. Erin is the program's new support staff member. They are a powerhouse of support for families who are navigating the adoption process and transitioning youth into their families.

The new team members have a variety of professional experiences to utilize in working with families and adoption teams. Their

backgrounds include work in adoption, foster care, residential, education and parent training. That knowledge means families can be matched with the specialist who is able to best support and understand their needs and those of the children being adopted.

Get to know them:

Shelby Denham says she loves bonding with the families and takes pride in knowing they trust her with their questions and concerns. "I have always loved helping people," she says.

Sierra Bates enjoys knowing that

members of her team have her back. "If I am ever struggling with ways to help a family, the MSP team will lend their own time to help me find resources."

Kristine Crummel likes creating safe, loving, happy homes for children.

Erin Dwan likes finding creative solutions to problems that make a huge impact in families' lives.

If you have a family who could use help from MARE's Match Support program, contact Supervisor Julie Miller at Julie_Miller@judsoncenter.org or call 734-528-2002.

MARE welcomes Meet & Greet partner agencies

Even during the pandemic, MARE is still able to bring youth and families together with virtual Meet & Greets.

We've had youth and families tell us they love the format. Since they're so popular, we hope to have them as often as possible, and that's where your agency can help.

If your organization has enough youth

and families and wants to host a Meet & Greet, we can help make it happen. Oftentimes, partnering with an agency for these events produces good results with youth and families being matched.

So if your agency is interested in hosting a Meet & Greet, contact Jessica Thompson at Jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org or call 734-528-2070. We look forward to hearing from you.



Mindfulness meditation helps during very trying times

STORY BY **KRISTINE CRUMMEL, MARE MATCH SUPPORT PROGRAM SPECIALIST**

Here's a positive challenge for you during this pandemic: Take charge of what you can control.

As anxiety runs high, lower your stress by giving meditation a try. After all, anyone can do it, and you don't need to sit cross-legged to practice it.

As you go through the suggested routines here, keep in mind that meditation is not about clearing all your thoughts. That is an impossible task since no one can be void of thought. Meditation is about bringing yourself to a place of calm and control.

So let's start by placing your feet flat on the floor and sitting up straight. Inhale slowly through your nose and make sure your belly expands. (You can place a hand on your stomach to make sure you are doing it correctly.) Hold that breath, then exhale while pushing as you breathe out. Let it all go. Repeat at least three times or more as needed.

Congratulations! You just meditated. Those breaths can make a big difference.

This technique gives you a chance to catch up with your emotions while setting aside some of your thoughts. Look, this pandemic is challenging and especially with everything else you have to stress about. Thinking about the news? When you can see your friends? Family issues? When life will return back to the way things were?

It is OK. Acknowledge the thoughts you are having, then redirect your attention back to yourself by focusing on your breathing. Mindfulness meditation can help you learn how to regulate your emotions and connect with yourself on a deeper level. This is where you will gain control of your thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

Meditation can help with self-esteem, memory, balancing your immune system and reducing your blood pressure and heart rate.

That being said, mindfulness meditation is called a practice because it takes actual practice to get better at it. You may struggle to quiet your mind at first.



That is OK; everyone does.

The great thing about meditation is there is no wrong way to do it! Still struggling? There are guided meditations available through YouTube to help you practice.

Do things feel out of control around you? Then, take back your power. Give yourself some peace. Mindfulness works to reduce anxiety. Just STOP, BREATHE and THINK (for as long as you need to). You've got this!!

Kristine Crummel used her knowledge to meld mindfulness, meditation and yoga together and has been teaching others her technique for about 10 years. If you have a question for her, send it to Kristine_Crummel@judsoncenter.org.

Book this exhibit now!!!

MARE announces Michigan Heart Gallery's new tour

Despite the pandemic, the 2020 Michigan Heart Gallery (MHG) is ready to hit the road for a tour.

You can make this roadshow happen by reserving it or any portion of it for an event or any occasion; it doesn't need to be a special one.

The MHG can be displayed in malls, offices, churches, synagogues, mosques, parks, arenas, restaurants, grocery stores, bookstores, toy stores, discount stores, home improvement stores and just about anywhere else!

In case you didn't know, the MHG is a traveling photographic exhibit featuring photos of youth living in foster care who are waiting for their forever family. MARE worked with more 50 professional photographers from



across the state to make the 2020 display possible. The display showcases 140 youth.

If you want to reserve the Heart Gallery or receive MARE's

assistance in planning a recruitment event, contact:

Jessica Thompson,
jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org or 734-528-2070.

You can suggest a youth for an In-Depth Profile

Let us know if you have a youth on your caseload who would be a good candidate for an In-Depth Profile. Contact Jennifer Brooks at jennifer_brooks@judsoncenter.org or 734-528-2061.



Calendar of Events

March 13
MARE Meet & Greet
11 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.

March 25
MARE Meet & Greet
6-7:30 p.m.

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

MARE contact info

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