



Kinnections

Inside this issue:

Natasha's Story 1 ***Natasha's Story*** by Kara Schechter, MSW Intern

Kinship and Deportation 2

Summer Activities 3

Sun and Water Safety Tips 4-5

MiTeam 6

Summer Festivals 7

I had the privilege of interviewing a fellow student who has lived in kinship care for about five years. Her name is Natasha; she is 20 years old and a sophomore majoring in social work at Michigan State University. She is involved with the Fostering Academics Mentoring Excellence program on campus (FAME), which helps students who are any of the following; foster care alumni, have been in kinship care, have experienced homelessness or are otherwise independent. The program provides support resources to students so they can have a successful experience during their academic career at MSU.

Natasha was raised by her mother; they had a great relationship and always got along. When Natasha was 15, her mother passed away and she went to live with one of her mother's sisters; Barb. It was difficult at first, Natasha and her aunt butted heads a lot over different things. Barb was stricter than Natasha's mother, and Natasha didn't know how to deal with that and Barb didn't know how to raise a teenage girl. There is a big generational gap between Natasha and her Aunt Barb, which influenced a lot of fighting and arguments.

Even though Natasha and her

aunt have fought in the past, and most likely will fight in the future, because that's just what families do. They get along great now and have been able to find things they have in common, such as; having the same taste in movies, loving animals (especially cats), and getting manicures and other things together. Natasha stated that her aunt has helped her so much in the five years she has been living with her. Her aunt encouraged Natasha and taught her organization skills and how to become more professional. Barb also helped Natasha get her first job and her first car. Natasha knows that her aunt cares about her and she feels loved from the rest of her family as well. Natasha knows that she has people supporting her as she goes through life. Natasha misses her mom every day, but she is glad that she was able to live with her aunt instead of having to go live with strangers.

Natasha's Advice to Other Children:

"Your situation doesn't define who you are; if there is a bad situation, be grateful for your health and that you aren't with complete strangers. It is a long process, it will get better, try to communicate. And don't be sad, for whatever reason you're in kinship care it doesn't mean that no one loves you, your new family took you in because they love you and want the best for you."

Natasha's advice for Caregivers:

"Respect that your child has an opinion, and get to know them. Don't try to change them, or that you have to formulate them into your own ways. The child can make their own judgments and be open to their ideas."

Kinship and Deportation

Caring for relative children who have been separated from their parent(s) due to deportation can be a very challenging and emotional time for everyone involved. Taking on the caregiving role and responsibility for a relative child can be very difficult; emotionally, mentally, and physically.

Children who have lost a relationship with their parent(s) may also experience symptoms of trauma related to the loss. Some common symptoms of trauma that your relative child may experience include: having nightmares, thinking about it all the time, wanting to NOT think about it, avoiding things/places/people that make them think about the trauma, feeling scared for no reason and having trouble concentrating at home or at school. Getting connected with counseling or therapy services or a support group may be helpful in working through this traumatic experience. For more information about responses to grief and loss in children, check out the KCRC's Fall 2013 Kinnections newsletter.

If a relative child comes into your care due to their undocumented parent(s) deportation, there are some resources that may be available to the child. If the child is part of the child welfare system (i.e. is in foster care) they will be eligible for a multitude of services. However, if the child is not a part of the system, resources may be limited. Below are some resources specifically for undocumented children and families in the United States.

The Specialized Immigrant Juvenile Visa (also referred to as the SIJ Visa) is available to undocumented immigrants under 21 who either live with only one parent or do not live with either parent. The visa is a very quick and direct way of gain-

ing legal status. More information regarding the SIJ Visa can be found by visiting: http://sji.gov/PDF/SIJ_Status.pdf. A lawyer may be required in order to begin the process. There are pro-bono (free) law clinics in the state of Michigan that can help with this process. Both Michigan State University as well as the University of Michigan support law clinics.

More information about the Michigan State University Immigration Law Clinic can be found by visiting: <http://www.law.msu.edu/clinics/immigration/about.html> or by calling (517) 336-8088.

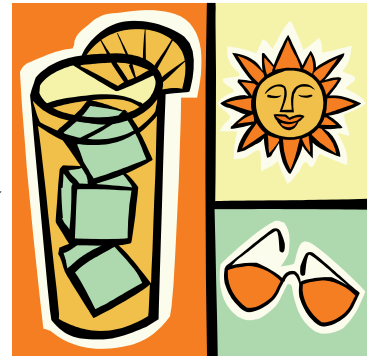
More information about the University of Michigan law clinic can be found by visiting: <https://www.law.umich.edu/clinical/pages/default.aspx> or by calling (734) 764-1358.

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) allows undocumented women who are in abusive relationships to file for legal status and work toward reunification with children who have been removed by the child welfare system. Pro-bono legal help is available to provide information and assistance regarding the VAWA as well. More information about this act can be found by visiting: <http://www.uscis.gov/general-keywords/vawa>.

This article was written by three MSW students at MSU as part of an advocacy project. Thanks to Anna Ziegler, Jessica Zeug, and Jeremy Stringer for their work.

Summers here, now what!?

Summer/Day Camps



- You can go online to the YMCA website (www.ymca.net) and search for a YMCA in your area. When you call ask about the different summer programs they provide. Your child will have a fun filled summer, make some new friends, and you won't have to worry about them while you are at work. For example, some programs provided by local YMCA's are; sports such as swimming; programs for family time; day care programs; as well as day camps for children of all ages.
- If you don't have a YMCA in your area you might try some of these other options: Churches and other faith communities often have short camps over the course of the summer, community colleges and universities offer learning camps for older children and youth, and sometime your local parks and recreation departments will have summer programs and activities. With a little research you should be able to keep the kids busy all summer!



Fun Activities for Home

- If day or summer camps aren't for you, then how about some ideas of things to do at home? The websites at the bottom of this article have a ton of activities for the summer, everything from great summer recipes to indoor activities on a rainy day and online educational games to keep those minds sharp for the fall. Some are different arts and crafts that are easy and fun to make and others are coloring pages and activities you can print off for your

child.

- Some fun activities are; going "camping" in your living room or bedroom, make a "tent" and a pretend "fire" and "roast" some marshmallows. Your child will have so much fun even on those rainy days.
- To get out and about, try going to local museums or on nature walks, or visiting your local library (they often have summer activities to help with bored kids). As long as you are spending some time with your child, they will love it.
- If you have older children who may be getting close to employment age, the summer is a great time to get some training and experience in. Contact your local Red Cross to see if they are offering a babysitter training. Consider volunteer opportunities for older children to help them stay busy and maybe even help them find a career.



Summer Safety

Pool/Beach Safety Tips:



If you are near a pool (or a beach) at all this summer take a look at these safety tips posted on: <http://spoonful.com/family-fun/10-pool-safety-tips-to-keep-swimming-fun> and www.PoolSafely.gov. Both sites have great recommendations for how to have fun and stay safe this summer. Below are just a few of those safety tips.

Swim where there is a lifeguard (or responsible parent) on duty.

This seems pretty obvious, especially because there are always signs posted by every pool. But what about if your child is swimming at a friend's house? Making sure an adult is monitoring the pool at all times is essential. Even strong swimmers can get overwhelmed especially when distracted by playing with a buddy.

Small doesn't equal safe.

Hot tubs can be just as dangerous as large pools. PoolSafely.gov recommends the same safety precautions for both including safety covers and fences. Children need to be monitored at all times no matter the size of the space they are splashing in.

Kids should avoid drains and pipes.

Pool plumbing can be a hazard. Moved by the tragic death of a 7-year-old girl who was entrapped by a drain, Congress passed the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act to require pools to comply with safety standards. A helpful checklist to determine whether your pool is safe is available at PoolSafely.gov.

Keep it mellow.

We're all familiar with the yells of "NO RUNNING!!" by a pool. But this is very good advice, running on slippery surfaces is dangerous for everyone around. Keeping horseplay under control may take some self-control (and parental instruction), but in the end everyone will have a better day. Don't forget to set a good example!

Wear sunscreen.

Even if kids are outside for just a few minutes, they are prone to sunburn. Always make sure you have sunscreen handy and check out our article on sun safety in this newsletter.

Don't step away.

You may not think about it, but stepping away to change the laundry or answer a phone call could be a snap decision with disastrous consequences. If something really needs your attention, call a swim break. Everyone out of the pool and indoors for a safety pause. (Also this could be a great time to get the children hydrated, see below!)

Be a party-pooper.

Nobody wants the fun to end, but if you notice kids getting tired, it is time to take a water break. Provid-

ing plenty of drinking water is sometimes overlooked with all that water in the pool, but dehydration is a real possibility even when swimming."

Have a first-aid kit on hand.

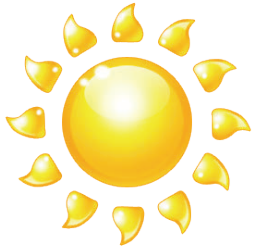
Being prepared for minor injuries can help avoid major ones. Bumps and bruises are a part of childhood. When they are easily treated with bandages, antibiotic ointment and cleaning pads that you have on-hand, the fun can quickly continue.

Set boundaries.

If you are in charge, don't be afraid to take charge. Showing kids where the deeper parts of the pool are before they enter is always a good idea. Taking kids on a "pool tour" to see where they can touch and where the easiest way to an edge is can help them find safe splashing places. Very small children should NEVER be in a pool without an adult, even if it seems shallow.

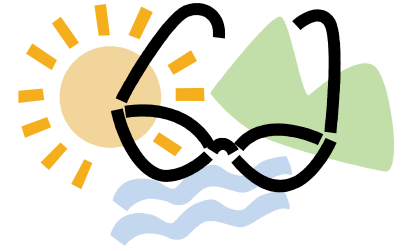
Watch out for lightning.

Lightning sometimes beats rain. Even if it isn't raining yet, lightning in the distance should be a reason to run for cover away from water. An approaching storm is a sign to get out of the pool.



Summer Safety

Staying Safe In the Summer Sun



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (The FDA) has released tips on staying safe in the sun. This includes information about the national “Don’t Fry Day” that occurs on the Friday before Memorial Day. You can find more information by visiting: <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm352255.htm>

Sun Safety Tips:

- Apply sunscreen at least 15 minutes before sun exposure.
- Although people with pale skin and light hair are most vulnerable, people of every shade are susceptible to sunburn and skin cancer
- Keep infants under six months out of the sun.
- No sunscreen stops all UV rays. Limit sun exposure, particularly between 10 a.m. and 2 pm., when the sun's rays are strongest
- Maintain caution on overcast days because UV rays can penetrate cloud cover.
- A variety of factors cause different amounts of UV radiation to reach different parts of the Earth at any given time. The EPA has created a website (http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/kids/kids_uvindex.html) for kids to help them understand UV radiation and sun risk that provides tips on what to do at each level of the UV index scale. One simple way to figure out how much UV you’re getting is by using your shadow. If your shadow is taller than you are (in the early morning and late afternoon), your UV exposure is likely to be low. If your shadow is shorter than you are (around mid-day), you are being exposed to high levels of UV radiation. Seek shade and protect your skin and eyes.
- Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours; more often if you are swimming or sweating.



“Don’t Fry Day”

The FDA is supporting "Don't Fry Day." The awareness campaign is sponsored every year on the Friday before Memorial Day by the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also supports the effort.

The message: Slip on a shirt. Slop on broad spectrum sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher. Slap on a wide-brimmed hat. Wrap on sunglasses. For more information on "Don't Fry Day" and skin safety, visit: www.skincancerprevention.org.

Caregivers Guide to MiTEAM

If you are raising a relative child involved with the foster care system then chances are that at some point you will be involved in a Family Team Meeting (FTM). Here is some helpful information on what a Family Team Meeting is. *Note: Parents can choose who attends the FTM. They may choose not to have the caregivers involved.*

What is MiTeam?

MiTEAM is Michigan's Child Welfare Case Practice Model. A practice model is something that is used to guide staff members, children, families, and anyone else involved in working together to achieve goals that focus primarily on the safety, well-being, and permanency of children and their families.

The practice model includes Family Team Meetings, which are ways where families can participate in planning for their children together with other supports there as well.

What is a Family Team Meeting?

Family Team Meetings are a structured approach to have everyone involved in case planning. These meetings include the family, the caregiver, any other supports, and professionals.

What happens at the Family Team Meeting?

The caseworker, birth parents, and/or youth will lead a discussion about the goals that have been established by the family, courts, and DHS policy.

The purpose of these meetings is to get all members of the team together to make the important and meaningful decisions about the child and their family.

These meetings are held as part of the case planning process.

At a minimum they occur quarterly to assess the progress that has been achieved toward meeting the goals set by the Parent Agency Treatment Plan.

These meetings can also be held to support a child's placement.

What Role do Caregivers play at Family Team Meetings?

You are a critical team member; you will assist in making the important decisions that need to be made about the care and welfare of the child.

You will be asked to share any information, observations, and ideas to best help the child.

FTM's are also there to support the caregivers. Other supports and services will be provided to help the child based on the information that the caregiver provides.

Tips for Attending a Family Team Meeting

- Be respectful and courteous at all times.
- Allow the family the opportunity to participate in developing solutions.
- Provide ideas regarding supports and services needed.
- Listen and seek to understand other points of view.
- Share specific observations about behaviors.
- Be honest, fair and behaviorally specific in what you say.
- Speak directly to group members, not about individuals as if they are not present.
- Respond to birth parent using clear and easy to understand language.
- Provide ideas on how you will support visitation plans.
- Act in a way that displays a helping relationship.

Summer Carnivals and Festivals

One idea for enjoying your time in the sun this summer may be to pack up and head out to one of Michigan's wonderful summer festivals or carnivals. There are so many different opportunities to experience an abundant

array of culture and people around the state. The most difficult thing may be to narrow down when and where the different activities are taking place. Well here are some websites that can help

you determine which events are the ones you want to attend.

<http://www.findfestival.com/michigan/2014/>

May

Palmer Park Art Fair-Detroit

Traverse City Chocolate Festival-Traverse City

MSU spring arts and crafts show—East Lansing

Holland Tulip Festival- Holland

Great Lakes Kite Festival –Grand Haven State Park

Bike Ypsi Spring Ride and Festival

June

Great Lakes Rodeo—Gwinn

Mayfaire Renaissance Festival –Marshall

Belleville National Strawberry Festival—Belleville

Spirit of the Woods Folk Festival—Brethren

Kalamazoo Institute of Arts Fair—Kalamazoo

July

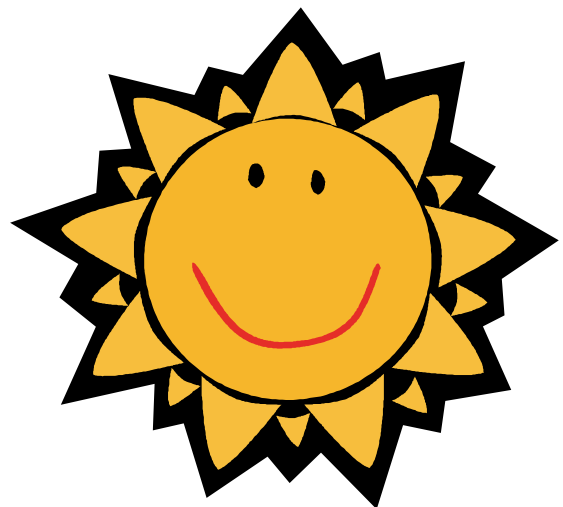
Battle Creek Field of Flight Air Show & Balloon Festival– Battle Creek

National Cherry Festival—Traverse City

Michigan Honey Festival– Frankenmuth

Elk Rapids Harbor Days– Elk Rapids

Lakeshore Art Festival—Muskegon





KCRC

Helping relatives raise relative children

Michigan State University
Kinship Care Resource Center
655 Auditorium Rd. Rm. 254
East Lansing, MI 48824
Phone: 800-535-1218
Toll Free: 800-535-9600
E-mail: kinship@msu.edu

Kinnections

A newsletter of the Kinship Care
Resource Center

Would you like to receive our newsletter directly? Simply call us or send us an e-mail and we will add you to our mailing list.

We're on the web!

Kinship.msu.edu



**Share this newsletter
with a kinship
caregiver you know!!!**

The Kinship Care Resource Center is a non-profit statewide organization through the School of Social Work at Michigan State University. The mission of the Kinship Care Resource Center is to support Michigan's kinship families by utilizing research to provide education and outreach to communities and agencies supporting kinship families and offer information, referral and case advocacy services to relatives raising relative children.

If you would like additional information about the MSU Kinship Care Resource Center, call (800) 535-1218 or e-mail us at kinship@msu.edu

You can also find us on Facebook—Michigan Kinship Care Resource Center at MSU and Twitter