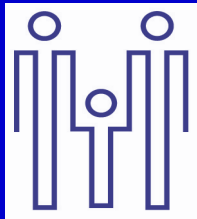


*“A Communication
Link with
Foster Families
Across the
Province”*



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Fostering Community Newsletter

Issue: 34

Fall 2011

The Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia is a charitable organization funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services and governed by a Board of Directors who are foster parents.

Mission Statement:

The Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia is a collective voice for all foster parents in Nova Scotia. In pursuit of this mission, the Federation will ensure assistance and support for foster families and Foster Family Associations.

Objectives:

- To ensure the integrity of the Federation as the collective voice for all foster parents
- To better equip foster parents in the provision of the best possible child care
- To promote a positive profile of foster care
- To encourage the development of Foster Family Associations and Support Groups
- To continually work toward improving foster care in Nova Scotia

Western Region to host 2012 AGM

June 8th, 9th, & 10th

More details to come!



2011/2012 Board of Directors

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Greetings Fellow Foster Families...

Fall is upon us and by all accounts I believe Mother Nature has her seasons mixed up. Although, after the short summer we had, we will take all the warm weather and sunshine we can get. Time has flown by and it doesn't seem that only four months ago several Board members and staff were in P.E.I. for the Canadian Foster Families Association's AGM. It appears that foster parents in other parts of Canada have the same concerns as we, in Nova Scotia. This is especially true in the retention and recruitment of foster families. The CFFA AGM was very informative and it is always helpful to build connections on a national level. Darlene Arseneau is our Provincial Representative on the CFFA Board and Mary Smith is Second-Vice President on the CFFA Executive. Mary and Darlene have just returned from a national meeting in Calgary and they will provide an update in our next newsletter. In June, Gary Landry and I attended the 14th World Conference on Restorative Practices. The plan is to apply restorative practices to the foster care system in Nova Scotia. It certainly gave us plenty of information to think about. We are eagerly waiting to hear details of a follow up to that workshop from the Minister's office.

This year's AGM "Changing Faces, Changing Futures", hosted by the Eastern Region, proved to be both informative and entertaining. The workshops provided a forum where questions, common to all foster parents, were received and answered. The entertainment was second to none and I would like to thank Wendell Fraser and his committee for hosting this year's AGM. It was one of the best. Also thank you to our foster parents who travelled from all areas of the province to make it such a success. We were able to raise \$1,575. Congratulations to Tamara Martin who was awarded the Thelma Goodall Memorial Bursary in the amount of \$500. Tamara plans to attend Mount St. Vincent University to pursue a Bachelor of Science Degree. We wish her well in her future endeavors.

In September the Board met in the Western Region. We invited foster parents to join us on Friday evening for a cup of tea and a chat. We discussed several concerns around respite and foster family support. On Saturday Board members attended a training session with Wanda Herbert, Community Board Trainer. We left with a long list of things to do. Keep your eye on the Federation website as we anticipate there will be some new and exciting updates in the near future. We hope to hold our board meetings at various locations throughout the Province to meet foster parents whom we represent. Prior to each meeting, a notice will be sent to foster parents in that region as an invitation to attend our Friday night meeting. We are always happy to see you and hear first hand of the work that you are doing with the children in your care. Gary Landry and Jill Randall will continue to travel to Association meetings. All you need to do is call and extend the invite.

The Board remains the same for 2011-2012. June Bruce, Mary Smith, Sheila Hill, Darlene Arseneau, and myself were re-elected for another three-year term. The Executive is as follows, Chairperson is Marie Nickerson, Vice Chair is Darlene Arseneau, Secretary is Mary Smith, and Treasurer is June Bruce. The Board is looking forward to another busy year. A sub-committee is being developed to look at the many inconsistencies in practice from agency to agency across the Province.



Continued on Page 4

...continued from page 3

Committee members are Vicki Wood, Director of Child Welfare as Chair, myself as Co-Chair, and our Association Presidents. Vicki Black, Provincial Foster Care Coordinator will also be part of this team. This Committee was established as a result of the information you as foster parents pass on to your Board Representatives. We in turn take this information to our meetings with the Department. We are very excited to see this committee up and running so we can address some of the inconsistencies that trouble foster parents. We have requested a meeting with the Minister and are waiting for a response which we expect shortly. We are still working on establishing new Foster Family Associations. If you do not belong to one, please call the Representative in your region so they can direct you to the one in your area. If your area does not have an Association maybe it would be something that you would consider starting. If so, speak to your Board representative.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Staff, and the Foster Families of Nova Scotia, we would like to extend our congratulations to Gary Landry on receiving the Chuck Lake Distinguished Service Award. This award was presented to Gary at the Nova Scotia Council for the Family Awards Banquet on September 27, 2011. Again, congratulations Gary on an award well deserved.

This year the launch of Foster Family Appreciation Week will be held on October 16th at the Canada Games Centre in Halifax. This year's theme is Foster Families Nourish Mind, Body and Spirit. There are many fun activities planned for all age groups. You should have received our invitation by now.

The Board of Directors continues to work on your behalf. We can continue to do this only if we hear from you and you voice your opinions. We would like to hear what is working in your area as well as what is not. We are only as strong as the people we represent. Each time we meet with the Minister of Community Services, the agenda is made up of items that we hear about from you. As always we are guided by our Mission Statement, which is printed on the front cover of the newsletter. It is posted at all Board meetings and helps to ensure that our focus is on improving foster care in this province.

In closing, we would like to say thank you for sticking with our kids for the long haul. Your commitment and dedication will always be a treasure to those who have benefited from your caring and loving homes. You are special and unique!



*Yours In Fostering,
Marie Nickerson
Chair FFFNS*

Executive Director's Report

This year's AGM was hosted by the Eastern Region and took place in Sydney on June 17th, 18th, and 19th, 2011. This event was very well attended with very positive feedback from those who attended. I want to acknowledge the Organizing Committee for a job well done.

Next year's AGM will be hosted by the Western Region. Please set aside the dates of June 8th, 9th, and 10th. For this event and if at all possible, please try to join us for an informative and fun weekend.

This year's "Foster Family Appreciation Week Launch" will take place at the Canada Games Centre in Halifax on October 16th, 2011. Hopefully many of you will be able to attend. The invitation letters were mailed out to all foster parents early in September 2011.

The Youth Achievement Awards will take place at the Best Western Glengarry in Truro on November 17th, 2011. This is always a very exciting day for award winners, and for all who are there to support them.

The Federation training program is organized and ready to roll for the fall season. The Allegation Support Worker and the undersigned continue to make ourselves available to attend Association Meetings, Regional Meetings, etc. in order to inform foster parents about our program and the support that we offer.

This fall, we will continue to contact foster parents to gather information in order to update our database.

Hoping you all had a great summer and wishing you a happy & healthy fall!

Respectfully Submitted,

Gary Landry (BSW, RSW)

Executive Director



Friendly Reminder...



LAUNCH OF
FOSTER FAMILY
APPRECIATION WEEK!

Sunday,
October 16th, 2011.
10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Canada Games
Centre
(26 Thomas Raddall Drive,
Halifax)





INCREASE TO CHILDREN IN CARE RATES

Effective April 1, 2011, the provincial government mileage rate has been increased from **\$38.13 cents/km. to \$40.15 cents/km.** The increase to the provincial government rate also applies to foster parents as well as adoptive parents in receipt of adoption subsidy.

- **0-16,000 km.:** **40.15 cents per km.**
- **16,001 km. and up:** **35.43 cents per km.**

Effective July 1, 2011, the daily basic foster care rate for children placed in foster care will increase by **10%, from \$15.91 to \$17.50** for children 0-9 years, and from **\$23.12 to \$25.43** for children 10 year and above.

Also effective July 1, 2011, the following children in care rates will increase:

- Birthday monies for all children in care will increase from **\$50 to \$125**;
- School Supply money will increase as follows:
 - School supply money for grades primary –6 will increase from **\$70 to \$120**
 - School supply money for grades 7 and over will increase from **\$120 to \$150**



VEHICLE INSURANCE



The Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia wants to make Foster Parents aware that they should contact their car insurance broker prior to the youth-in-care in their home obtaining his/her driver's license. Insurance premiums for young people can be very expensive.

If there is a person in your household who has a driver's license, either he/she has to be insured, or you, as the policy holder, must sign a form indicating that there is a member in your household who holds a license but is not insured. Once this form is signed, the insurance company has the option to cease to underwrite your automobile insurance.

Therefore, it is very important to gather all your insurance information prior to a youth in care obtaining their license.

Department of Community Services, Educational Bursary Program and Extended Education Bursary Program

The Educational Bursary Program was implemented by the Department in 2007 to provide for the post secondary needs of children in permanent care and custody. Under the program, eligible youth receive funds to cover the actual costs of tuition, books and related expenses in addition to those items covered under regular maintenance. This program is available to youth up to the age of 21.

For those youth who have been in Permanent Care and Custody and are over the age 21, a Post Care and Custody Agreement can be signed to extend the Educational Bursary Program until they are 24. Funding includes all costs identified above.

The Educational Bursary Program may also be available to those youth who have been in permanent care and custody and left care upon turning 19 years of age.

Children who have been placed for adoption after their 13th birthday may also be eligible for the Educational Bursary Program.

For more information on the Educational Bursary Program please contact your Agency or District Office. Information on the Educational Bursary Program is available in the Children In Care and Custody Manual located on-line at

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/>.



PARENTS!

Do you have a 13-15 year old with a chronic health condition?

(Such as asthma, arthritis, diabetes, IBS, etc)



YES

YES

Interested in helping your teen manage their health?

DETAILS...

For Parent's

Connect with other parents while learning more about effectively helping your teen manage their health.

HALIFAX, Oct 21st (6-8:30pm)
BROOKLYN, Nov 4th (6-8:30pm)

DETAILS...

For Youth

- ✦ meet other youth
- ✦ go to circus school!
- ✦ free lunch



HALIFAX
October 21st (6-8:30 p.m.)
and October 22nd (10-3:00 p.m.)
Registration deadline: October 14th

BROOKLYN
November 4th (6 p.m.-8:30 p.m.)
and November 5th (10 a.m.-3 p.m.)
Registration deadline: October 27th



To register or for more information, contact Shaleen Jones at 494-7742 or email shaleen.jones@iwr.nshealth.ca





Central Region – Ken Lucas & Mary Smith

Hello from Ken Lucas and Mary Smith, your Central Region Board representatives, and welcome back from summer to all Foster Families. I know that many of you had a very busy season and although I can't guarantee that things will slow down for you, I can let you know that you're not alone in your endeavours.

It should be noted that the Board of the Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia did not slow down much over the summer, holding conference calls and meetings as usual as they work on your behalf. It was nice to see the fruits of our labour as increases in board rates for fostering, school allowances, mileage rates, and birthday/Christmas allowance all came into effect. The Board knows that there are still many things to address within the Fostering community in Nova Scotia (such as Respite and the Recruitment & Retention of Foster Families, etc) but rest assured, the Board will continue to work on your behalf, meeting with the Minister of Community Services and others in the field to help make fostering better for all involved; especially the children in care.

Locally it was unfortunate that the Cosmic Bowling event planned over the summer fell through due to lack of RSVP's; but we are going ahead with plans for a "Christmas Gathering" for the Central Region as well as other events over the next few months.

With that in mind, I remind all Central Region foster families that their Association & Support Group will resume Thursday evening meetings on 21 October 2011 @ 6:30 pm in the Dartmouth District Office. That first meeting of the fall will be a meet and greet with general discussions, Christmas event planning etc. We hope to have guest speakers such as Mary Ann Fraser at future meetings to be available for questions, etc. The Association meetings are a great place for foster families to meet, bring forward their ideas on how to support each other through events or pass on valuable experience to each other. It is also a great place to meet with your Board members in person to convey areas of concern or to share good news you would like passed along to other foster parents.

Mary is presently attending a CFFA meeting in Calgary, but on her behalf I can tell you that both she and I are looking forward to the upcoming foster family launch. This year, the launch is being held at the Canada Games Centre in Halifax on October 16th, 2011. We hope to have an opportunity to meet as many foster parents as possible.

Ken Lucas - (902) 221-0852

Mary Smith - (902)443-7716

Western Region- June Bruce & Joanne Mutton

We hope everyone had a great summer! We are both looking forward to the next three years on the Board of Directors. The Policy Committee is working hard on policies and bylaws. It would be great to meet more of the foster parents in the Western Region, therefore I urge everyone to attend an Association meeting when scheduled in your area. Please call either June (North Shore) or Joanne (South Shore) to arrange this. We are also excited to host the 2012 AGM! We are hoping to have it somewhere in the Bridgewater area, however plans are not confirmed. This should be a fantastic time for all. More information about this event will be distributed in the new year. Have a great fall.

Joanne Mutton - (902) 742-9497

June Bruce - (902) 792-1602



Eastern Region- *Sheila Hill & Carol Ann Lamond*

Greetings from the Eastern Region!

We hope everyone is enjoying our beautiful fall weather and that everyone enjoyed their summer . Now on to what has been happening in our region. We have received a 10% board rate increase and a new mileage rate of .4015 which is great news .

The AGM was held at the Delta Sydney in June with almost 100 people attending and it was a great success. The annual Foster Family Appreciation Week Launch will be held on October 16th, at the Canada Games Centre in Halifax. This is always a good time for all our children.

Our upcoming Regional meeting will be held in Baddeck in November. It will be a good time so come and meet other foster parents and catch up on all the latest news in your area. We always have a great lunch and lots of nice door prizes so we hope to see you there. Until next time thank you for your unfailing dedication to family fostering.

God Bless

Carol Anne Lamond - (902) 794-1877

Sheila Hill - (902)226-3778

Northern Region- *Carol Zegray & Marie Nickerson*

Greetings from the Northern Region:

We hope everyone enjoyed their summer, and are getting comfortably back into their school routines. The Northern Region is beginning to see changes in the way the Department will carry out services in the future. There will be question and answer sessions set up in the area so foster parents can be well- informed. Our first information session will take place in Antigonish on October 5th, 7:00 pm at the Department of Community Services office on Main Street.

We have been working hard in the Northern Region to re-establish our foster parent Associations. Our first Association meeting for Colchester/Cumberland County was held in Truro on September 26th with foster parents attending from Amherst, Antigonish, Truro and surrounding areas. We were very happy with our turnout. It was an evening of fun, great conversation and support. Our next meeting is scheduled for October 24th, and notices will follow in the mail. We elected Executive Representatives during the meeting; with Rose Anne Wright being elected as President, Levedia Terris as Vice-President, Carla Carey as Treasurer and Geraldine Taylor as Secretary. Congratulations ladies! We hope everyone enjoys the beautiful colours that fall is about to bring upon us!

Best Regards,

Carol Zegray - (902) 895-4227

Marie Nickerson - (902) 863-2639

Recruitment and Retention of Foster Homes

As we all know, word of mouth is usually the best form of advertisement/recruitment. Therefore, please share your “positive foster care experiences” with your family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.

Although fostering comes with many challenges, you all know that it can be extremely rewarding. These “positive/rewarding” experiences are the stories that people need to hear in order for them to consider the possibility of becoming foster parents. Planting the seed can produce great results.

Unfortunately, there is always a need for foster homes and we do have many good families in our own communities. The more foster homes that we have available in each region, the greater the chances that children in care can remain living within their own community. Thus, they can continue to attend the same school and activities as well as retain their culture.

This is something for all of us to think about and do our part whenever possible.



“A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove...But the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child” –Forest E. Witcraft



We would like your Email address!



In order to help us forward information to your home in a more timely manner, we would appreciate receiving your current Email address.

Please send your Email address to Rose Callaghan at **callagrm@gov.ns.ca**

Hopefully this will help us improve the service that we provide to the Foster Families of Nova Scotia.

Greetings Foster Parents!

Now that fall has arrived and most Foster Parent Associations are getting back into the swing of things, I would just like to remind foster parents that I am available to attend Association meetings if foster parents in your area have questions about Allegations/Investigations or the new *Protocol for Investigating Allegations of Child Abuse and Neglect in Foster Homes* (2010).

For those foster parents who are not able to attend Association meetings in their area, please feel free to contact me for information or to answer any questions you may have. I can be reached by telephone at 902-424-2711 or toll-free at 1-888-845-1555 or by email at randaljm@gov.ns.ca.

Hope to see lots of you at our upcoming Launch of Foster Family Appreciation Week on October 16th at the Canada Games Centre in Halifax!

Jill Randall, BSW, RSW
Foster Allegation Support Worker





Dartmouth Sportsplex Membership

Are you interested in receiving a **discount on a membership** for the **Dartmouth Sportsplex**? If so, please call or email Rose Callaghan at (902) 424-0092/callagrm@gov.ns.ca for more details & you could receive a **7-day trial pass for free!**



Colchester/Cumberland County has a new Foster Parent Association!

Please see page 11 for more details

St. John's Ambulance is the only outside training that is approved for reimbursement by the Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia. If you are required by your Agency/District Office to attend First Aid/CPR, please contact the Federation of Foster Families to discuss options **before** registering.



**Foster Family
Appreciation Week!**
October 16th - 22nd, 2011

Foster
Care

Training Department Highlights!

September 9th marked the international Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day. On September 10th & 11th, the Kings County District Office sponsored a 2-day training session on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder for foster parents, adoptive parents and social workers within the Western Region. Those in attendance believed it to be important to establish a support network for foster parents and adoptive parents as a means of addressing feelings of isolation and also as a vehicle to receive updated resources and information as it becomes available in Canada. As such, an email group has been established for those who attended this training. If you would like to become connected with this group, please contact either myself or Rhonda Elgar, Foster Care Social Worker at the Kings County District Office. There will be another training session offered as part of the Professional Development for Early Childhood Educators at Mount Saint Vincent University on October 1st & 22nd. Please contact your local Family Resource Centre or the Federation Training Department for resource information regarding FASD.

Although this newsletter will not be distributed prior to October 1st, I would like to highlight the celebration of Treaty Day, held annually on October 1st, which marks the beginning of Mi'kmaq History Month in Nova Scotia as proclaimed in 1993 by then Premier John Savage and Mi'kmaq Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy. The purpose of Treaty Day is to promote public awareness about the Mi'kmaq culture and heritage for all citizens of Nova Scotia.

In 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed the validity of the Treaty of 1752 - signed between "Jean Baptiste Cope, Chief Sachem of the Tribe of Mick Mack Indians, Inhabiting the Eastern Coast of Said Province," and Peregrine Thomas Hopson, Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia - in its ruling of the court case, James Matthew Simon v. the Queen. This ruling not only validated Aboriginal Treaty rights but also confirmed the unique relationship which exists between the Mi'kmaq and the Crown, an agreement which is further maintained within the Covenant Chain, a series of interconnected treaties of mutual consent.

In 1986, Grand Chief of the Mi'kmaq Nation, Donald Marshall Sr., invited all Mi'kmaq to "observe October 1, 1986 and every year thereafter as Treaty Day to commemorate the unique and special relationship that exists between the Mi'kmaq and her Majesty." Since then, the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, with the involvement of other reputable Mi'kmaq organizations and associations, has led the organizing of activities for the celebration of October 1st - Treaty Day. Treaty Day festivities first and foremost reflect the beliefs of the Mi'kmaq people with respect to the obligations of Treaty Rights. Throughout the festivities, the Nova Scotia population will become more aware of the Mi'kmaq Nation and history, which will not only enrich their own cultural and historical knowledge of the Mi'kmaq, but will also enable the Mi'kmaq Nation to be recognized in a manner of which they are deserving.

I would invite you to explore opportunities during the month of October to participate in activities which will raise awareness of the Mi'kmaq culture for the children in your care. Resources are available from the Federation office if opportunities do not exist within your community and you would like to explore this further. Please do not hesitate to contact one of the staff within the Training Department for assistance.



Debbie Thibault
Coordinator of Training

Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia

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We're also on the web!

www.fosterfamilies.ns.ca

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Do you have any news or articles you would like to see featured in this newsletter? If so, please contact our editor Rose Callaghan at (902) 424-0092 or callagrm@gov.ns.ca