

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](http://www.mare.org).



# OVERWHELMED?



## Get the help you need to take the break you need

STORY BY **MAGARET WHITE, MARE ADOPTION NAVIGATOR**

Every parent needs a break at times. For parents of children with challenging behavior, those breaks aren't easy to get.

Friends and family who are initially willing to help us can sometimes get a little burned out by our children's behaviors. Many parents start to isolate themselves rather than ask for help. Some get a little irritated by others' lack of willingness to help.

Instead of getting mad, get proactive! As parents, you are the expert when it comes to your children. You can help others understand and give them concrete ideas of what they can do. Help them help you!

### Quick Trauma Training

People who didn't choose to adopt

may not need to know all of the in-depth information about trauma and its effects on children. However, some minimal understanding of how trauma impacts children can increase the empathy loved ones have for your children and for you. The video "Removed" is a good place to start. It does a wonderful job showing how previous traumatic events can be triggers for current behaviors. In addition, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network lists symptoms and behaviors associated with exposure to trauma such as excessive temper, regressive behaviors, aggression, imitation or acting out of past traumatic experiences, being easily startled, having poor social skills, difficulty making friends and seemingly unreasonable fears. Other signs include being anxious, sad and

irritable, having low self-esteem, blaming themselves for the past trauma and inability to trust others. Physical symptoms include stomachaches or headaches, difficulty falling asleep, night terrors, poor appetite, and screaming and crying excessively.

### Building Resiliency

Helping children who have been traumatized build resiliency is a major part of what helps them heal. That resiliency – or ability to bounce back – helps them learn how to cope with traumatic events from their past and stressful situations they may face in the future. As your child's parent, you play a major role in building resiliency; consistent parenting and

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## Did you know?

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange hosts many Meet & Greets throughout the year.

**MARE** Meet & Greet  
These events offer adoptive parents who have an approved home study a chance to interact face-to-face with many

of Michigan's waiting youth while having fun with them at the same time. MARE Meet & Greets are held throughout the state at various churches and community centers.

They are typically held on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and lunch is provided. It is our hope that many matches will be made in an effort to find our waiting youth their forever families.

For more information about MARE Meet & Greets, visit [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org) or call Jessica Thompson at 734-528-1695.



## MICHIGAN ADOPTION DAY

Giving thanks for families

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2016



In Oakland County's courthouse, 11 adoptions were finalized on Michigan Adoption Day on November 24, 2015.

# Celebrate the joy of Adoption Day

STORY BY **MARK FISK, MARE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST**

When my young son nearly died in the hospital, I questioned whether being an adoptive parent of a child with special needs was worth such angst.

Even today, I struggle with the choice my wife and I made and whether our adopted son might be better off with someone else. Certainly our lives would be less complicated, and we wouldn't get the stares from customers and clerks in grocery stores or from drivers and passengers who pass us as we take walks and who all surely wonder what we're doing with a child who looks so different from us.

Sometimes our son challenges us, and we do our best to console him and make him feel comforted and loved. Sometimes he pushes back, and we let him have his space. And sometimes his behavior gets a bit overwhelming, yet we persevere as many adoptive parents of children with special needs do, all the while still questioning.

Then he'll do something amazing, whether it's wowing a crowd while playing the piano at a local

*For information about National Adoption Month and Michigan Adoption Day, visit [www.mare.org/MI-Adoption-Day](http://www.mare.org/MI-Adoption-Day). Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Twitter during the entire month of November as we honor adoptive families and showcase the children who still seek a family to call their own.*

theater or just getting dressed by himself on a Saturday morning and coming to the breakfast table without any prompting.

Those are the times that I think about as National Adoption Month and Michigan Adoption Day roll around. Despite the struggles that all adoptive parents face, we share something very special: an enduring love of our child and a commitment to him or her for the rest of our lives.

In the end, the questioning seems rather pointless.

# An active, artistic, affectionate girl

## Rachel's likes:

- Munching on chicken sandwiches from McDonald's.
- Playing board games and listening to music.
- Reading the "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" series.
- Swimming and riding her bike.

## Rachel's crystal ball:

- Becoming a veterinarian and treating her favorite animals, cats and dogs.

## Creative interests:

- Coloring in adult coloring books while using her favorite colors, pink and blue.

## Qualities of a forever family:

- Two parents or a single female parent who has a strong support network.
- Knowledge of the impact of trauma on a child's development and behavior.
- Able to ensure Rachel receives the services that will help her now and into adulthood.



Rachel, 13, C08372

## Help, continued from page 1

the development of a secure bond with you is critical for the development of that key protective factor. But relationships with other nurturing and caring adults, such as your secondary caregivers, also help a child build resiliency. So give kudos where it is deserved! Be sure the secondary caregivers in your life know that not only are they giving you a much-needed break, but also the time and care they give your children can actually help them heal.

## Creating Consistency

When secondary caregivers spend time with your children, the instinct may be to take them on special outings or give them special treats. While this is kind, many children

get overwhelmed and the "fun" can result in a major meltdown later. If your children are easily overstimulated and do better with routine, explain to your secondary caregivers what works best. Sometimes keeping the children's world manageable and consistent is the best way to support their behavior. Suggest that your secondary caregivers play a game of catch instead of taking the kids to see a ball game. Suggest making ice cream sundaes at home instead of going to the ice cream parlor. They can try popping popcorn and watching movies in the living room instead of going to the theatre.

## Specific Ways to Help

Your secondary caregivers may not know what they can do to best

support you. Share this list (and add ideas of your own) for specific ways secondary caregivers can help your family:

- Having them offer to take the children for an afternoon or evening. It's easier to accept an offer of help than it is to ask for it!
- Accompanying the family when going on outings. An additional adult can help manage behaviors.
- Making a dinner or running errands. These everyday tasks can be a challenge.
- Listening without judgment.
- Asking parents for their tips on managing the child's behaviors. Use the same language and techniques when you care for the child.



VS.



# Tips for fueling your kids' optimal functionality

STORY BY **JENNIFER JACKSON, MARE MATCH SUPPORT SPECIALIST**

Even though you might roll your eyes when someone says, "You are what you eat," the saying is especially true for your kids.

Studies have linked nutrition and dietary habits to cognitive and behavioral function in children. Kids who eat healthy are able to cope with stress and regulate their emotions better. A few simple dietary changes may benefit your child. Here are a few tips to help your kids function at their best.

A quality protein breakfast may be one of the simplest and healthiest ways to begin the day. Protein will help your kids feel energized and improve their cognitive functioning. Besides, a high carbohydrate diet will increase insulin and make kids feel "foggy" and experience

lower energy. A high-protein breakfast may include a combination of eggs, yogurt, fruit and yogurt smoothies (or parfaits), oatmeal with milk instead of water, turkey sausage, or peanut butter on toast.

For a protein-packed lunch, consider deli sandwiches or roll-ups without the bread, cottage cheese, apple or celery with peanut butter, trail mix with nuts, hummus with veggie sticks, or crackers and cheese. Get creative with lunch and snacks by helping your kids build personal bento boxes.

In addition to fueling your kids with energy, keep them hydrated. Studies have shown even mild dehydration can reduce memory and increase anxiety and fatigue. Offer water

as an alternative to sugary drinks. Sugary drinks can lead to tooth decay, health issues and impact cognitive functioning. If you can't break the fruit juice habit, water down your child's juices or sports drinks.

By providing the brain the nutrients it needs for optimal functioning, kids will benefit from better cognition, improved focus and drive, and less distractibility. To make sure they get all of the nutrients needed for health, choose the recommended number of daily servings from the five major food groups – grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat and beans. If you have concerns about the impact of food on your child, keep a food journal and consult your pediatrician.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 28, 2017

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

For more information regarding these events please contact *Jessica Thompson*, MARE Recruitment Specialist:

[jessica\\_thompson@judsoncenter.org](mailto:jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org)

## Fun 'n game

It was such a hit the last time that MARE and the Detroit Pistons are planning another Adoption Day at the Palace of Auburn Hills. The event will take place on January 21, 2017. For more information, visit [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org)



## Support for families

MARE's Match Support Program is a statewide service for families who have been matched with a child from the MARE website and are moving forward with an adoption. Match support specialists provide families support for up to 90 days before and during the child's transition into the home. For more information, call MARE at **800-589-6273**.