

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.



Calming first Meet & Greet jitters

STORY BY **KELLI OSTROSKY, MARE ADOPTION NAVIGATOR**

Attending your first Meet & Greet to mingle with youth eligible for adoption can bring mixed emotions, from excitement to anxiety.

If you find yourself in the latter camp, here are answers to some common questions to help you feel more at ease.

What does the schedule typically look like?

Attendees arrive, sign-in and receive name tags followed by separate orientations for youth

and families.

The whole group then comes together for an introductory ice breaker activity. Games and activities are next, followed by lunch, additional activity time and a debriefing session and survey at the end. This is the time when more questions can be addressed and interest in specific youth can be expressed.



If a youth asks me if I will adopt him/her or if he/she can go home with me, how do I answer?

During youth orientation, MARE staff explain that the focus of the day is on having fun and interacting with parents and that no youth will be going home that day with adoptive parents. If you still get this question, remind the youth that his/her worker will help make any future decisions regarding adoption and redirect

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MARE Intern Sarah Dubuc, left, helps Aliyah (C09316) with her ceramic project at a recent Meet & Greet at an arts facility.

Meet the stars!



Theodore (C09259).

TJ likes exercising his mind and body

Even though he isn't going to make it to college by age 10, TJ, as Theodore is known, resembles a boy genius in his own way.

"TJ is a thinker; he has a high IQ and likes to learn," his worker says. One example of his brainpower shows in his reasons for wanting to travel to France, Rome, Greece, China and South America.

"It's where famous things happen," he says. "There are iconic people there."

His intellect also shows in the TV programs that he enjoys watching, which don't necessarily include cartoons. Instead, TJ prefers watching nature and animal shows, and his favorite subjects in school aren't gym and recess but rather science and reading. In fact, TJ loves curling up with a good book in his spare time. When he gets older, TJ wants to become a firefighter or auto mechanic.

This thinker/tinkerer has another career goal of becoming a sports bike racer. TJ loves riding bikes along with fishing, camping and playing soccer. He also participates in basketball and Boy Scouts.

TJ looks forward to playing board and card games, going to soccer games and riding bikes with his future forever family. He also wants a family who likes Pokemon.



Shamariona (C08478).

Shamariona dreams really big

Shamariona wants others to know that she loves herself.

When she's asked what other information she wants people to know, Shamariona replies, "I am awesome." Her worker adds, "She gives the best hugs!" As if that weren't enough for prospective parents to ponder, the thing Shamariona looks forward to doing most with her forever family is "to have fun."

This fun-loving girl is very smart, friendly and happy. When she gets older, Shamariona wants to be a fashion designer. "I have everything planned out," she says about her retail space, which would include a purchasing area, a teaching space, a dining room and a clothes-making area.

Shamariona dreams just as big about traveling. If she could visit anywhere in the world, she would like to go to Florida and bask in the Sunshine State's warmth.

Shamariona's favorite animal is the tiger and her favorite subject in school is math. In fact, Shamariona takes pride in her schoolwork.

After school and on the weekends, Shamariona enjoys drawing, dancing, making art and playing with dolls.

SAVE THE DATE!

Foster & Adoptive Parent Training
Practical Advice for Raising Children with Attachment Issues with trainer
Rosemary Jackson



Saturday,
June 2, 2018
from
10 a.m to
4 p.m.

Registration at 9:30 a.m.

Royal Oak

Pre-register on

mare.org

POST ADOPTION RESOURCE CENTERS SERVE FAMILIES

Post Adoption Resource Centers support adoptive and guardian families after finalization through the age of 21.

Services include adoption sensitive support, support groups and events for parents and children, educational trainings and

seminars, information, referral and coordination of appropriate community services and in-home telephone seminar for families in crisis. Services are free and voluntary.

For more information, visit www.mare.org/For-Families/Post-Adoption-Information



RAISING AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent. The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign

promotes adoption from foster care and raises awareness of the 112,000 children and teens waiting to be adopted. This year's campaign theme – "What to Expect When You Are Expecting a Teen" – highlights the need for families for teens. Of more than 5,000 children nationally in foster care actively photolisted on adoptuskids.org, 43 percent are 15–18 years old, the website says.*



*Adoptive families are needed for the more than 50 percent of Michigan children on mare.org who fall within 14-18 years old.

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them back to the activity. It's OK to talk about your intentions to enjoy the day and get to know them during the event.

What if the youth has personal questions such as my last name and where I live?

It's OK to just say, "Today we are going by first names. I'm Mike and my color is green. That will help you remember me when it's time to complete your survey." Instead of saying where you live, answer in a general way such as, "Not too far away" or "Southeast Michigan." Most youth won't continue to ask for details; typically they are trying to make conversation.

If I meet a child I really enjoy, can I spend more time with him or her?

During lunch and free time afterwards, seating is flexible to allow for more time with individual youth. However, it's entirely possible (and common) to enjoy time with a youth who didn't initially grab your attention either on the website or at the beginning of the event. This is the beauty of the day; it can open up doors for unexpected and enjoyable interactions. When you interact with youth who you're interested in, make sure to remember their names so you can include that information when completing your survey at the end of the event.



Arts and crafts often are a part of MARE Meet & Greets.

What should I say if they offer information on their history?

Acknowledge their feelings. For example, you can say, "I'm sorry that happened; it must have been very hard for you. I am glad you came today and that I had this opportunity to meet you." Then redirect the conversation back to the purpose of the day, having fun and interacting with each other.

To sign up for a future Meet & Greet, visit www.mare.org. If you have additional questions, call us at 800-589-MARE.

Calendar of Events

June 16

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

July 14

MARE Meet & Greet, Adrian
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
A Waiting Family Forum training will be held after the Meet & Greet.

August/September (date TBD)

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

August 8

Kinship Adoption Festival,
The festival begins at 5:30 p.m., at Veterans Memorial Park, 32400 Jefferson Ave., St. Clair Shores. A link with more details will be posted soon at www.mare.org

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

Looking to meet some of the children on MARE who are available for adoption?



Attend a Meet & Greet!
Contact us at 800-589-6273 or at mare@judsoncenter.org for more information.