

**To: MFPA Board**  
**From: John Bertulis**  
**Re: Foster Parent Ombudsman Report**  
**Date: April 6, 2011**

Because we were pressed for time at Friday's Board Meeting, I volunteered to draft and send this written report. In terms of the Meeting, I was pleased with the number who attended. I am grateful to Interim Secretary Ted Dallas for joining us and fielding questions from the Group. It was good that there were some positive things expressed along with concerns. As those of you present can surmise, he is very supportive of resource parents and appreciative of your role in the Child Welfare System.

I want to express gratitude to Sam Macer and Helen Nicholson for representing MFPA at the Eastern Shore Regional Conference. Since Sam had to leave early, Helen did an excellent job promoting MFPA pretty much by herself, with some help from Bonnie Shuler. Kudos also to Michele Burnette and Debbie Mills who spent last weekend working with Give Camp volunteers to create the Maryland Resource Parent Teacher Student Association web site. It looks great.

Hopefully, you all had a chance to read the March edition of Foster Parent News and found it informative. If anyone becomes a member of ifoster, please let me know how it works out. Also, I would like to include in the "Around the State" segment, information about what is going on in the local jurisdictions. Please pass along any tidbits; the deadline for the next edition is May 31st.

The Foster Parent Panel that meets with newly hired Child Welfare workers is going well. We are about to have another Orientation for more panel members. I am grateful to those resource parents who have volunteered.

I want to share that it was just announced that Anita Wilkins, a long time SSA employee, has been appointed as the new Director of Resource Development, Placement, and Support Services (Kevin Keegan's old position). Anita most recently has been working in Carnitra White's office, coordinating special projects. She is a wonderful person and I am sure will be an advocate to our foster parents and MFPA.

The National Foster Parent Association has made some drastic improvements over recent months and is doing some wonderful things. If you get a chance, go to their web site and check out their Newsletter, the National Advocate. They are working on re-introducing the National Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Act and may have a prominent Senator to sponsor the Bill. In essence what that is, is a National Foster Parent Bill of Rights.

As Secretary Dallas mentioned, he has asked me to address a means to measure how the Maryland Foster Parent Bill of Rights is being upheld in Maryland. I have a plan and will share more at the next Board meeting.

As of 2-28-2011, there are 7,651 children in foster care in Maryland. 5,607 are in family homes (73%). There are currently 2,671 public foster homes of which 598 (22%) are restricted.

For the period (quarter) January-March 2011, I conducted/opened 15 Foster Parent Ombudsman Reviews and responded to 54 general inquiries (Information and Referral). I conducted eight training sessions, plus two Foster Parent Panels.

This month I make two challenges to you Board members. One is the same old song with a new melody. Please participate in the MFPA Board meetings. There are only four in person meetings a year, on Fridays, as requested. The intervening meetings are evening conference calls. If you cannot participate, please try to get someone from your jurisdiction who can participate. The second challenge is in regard to elections. Certainly, being an officer is not for everybody. However, if everyone on the Board personally asked someone in their jurisdiction to consider running for office, we would probably get some quality nominees.

Thanks for all that you do. Hope to see you at upcoming Foster Parent Appreciation Events. Do not forget the next MFPA Board Meeting conference call on Wednesday, May 3 at 7 PM. Talk to you then...