

Adoption Matching Events for Children in Foster Care



A grant proposal requesting funds for awareness events at Mattress Firm in Newton, Massachusetts on behalf of Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE Inc.)

Prepared by Jade Tang

Issued to Mattress Firm

Mattress Firm Newton
230 Needham St Unit E2
Newton Upper Falls, MA, 02464

December 15, 2021

Dear Mattress Firm,

My name is Jade Tang and I am writing on behalf of Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE Inc.) We are respectfully requesting a grant in the amount of \$85,000 to hold at least two adoption matching events at Mattress Firm in Newton, Massachusetts.

Our nation's child welfare system is being stretched far beyond its capacity as families are devastated by the opioid crisis and other issues that pose threats. Since 2015, more than 420,000 children have been in foster care in the United States. In 2020, nearly 75,000 children and young adults from birth to age 22 were involved in the system. As part of their community outreach initiative, Mattress Firm is an advocate for children in foster care and adoption. Sharing the same principles and morals, we can combine our forces to have an even bigger impact in Middlesex County and Massachusetts.

The mission of Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) is to find adoptive homes for children and teens waiting in foster care. It is a private non-profit agency that was founded in 1957 in Newton, Massachusetts. MARE is the only adoption exchange in Massachusetts that works under contract with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF). It also collaborates with contracted adoption agencies to connect potential adoptive parents with waiting children.

Sharing the same principles and morals, Mattress Firm and MARE can combine our forces to have an even bigger impact in Middlesex County and Massachusetts. These events are casual, interactive mixers that provide families the opportunity to learn more about foster care adoption, meet waiting children, and network with social workers. The events would also be great learning blocks for the children and strengthen their communication skills as they are exposed to new people.

Regards,

Jade Tang
Project Manager



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Background of Organization

The mission of Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) is to find adoptive homes for children and teens waiting in foster care. It is a private non-profit agency that was founded in 1957 in Newton, Massachusetts. MARE is the only adoption exchange in Massachusetts that works under contract with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF). It also collaborates with contracted adoption agencies to connect potential adoptive parents with waiting children.

We provide support services to families and children throughout the adoption process resulting in stable placements and helps interested potential parents reach their goal of being a parent to a new addition in their family. Through our innovative programs and committed staff, we bridge the gap between children waiting for adoption, potential adoptive families, and social workers. Our mission is built through collaboration with social workers, families, funders, and institutions. After the process of adoption, MARE is not completely out of the picture as they can offer further guidance and support services.

Our vision is to find a permanent home for every child in foster care awaiting adoption, provide support services to families and children throughout the adoption process thus creating stable placements, and make MARE one of the best nonprofits to work for in Massachusetts. We are always looking for ways to raise awareness and educate the public about adoption and foster care. Spreading accurate information and recruiting potential adoptive families motivates us to provide top notch expertise. We are committed to pursuing inclusive policies, practices, and strategies that advocate for all children in need.



Statement of the Problem

Our nation's child welfare system is being stretched far beyond its capacity as families are devastated by the opioid crisis and other issues that pose threats. Since 2015, more than 420,000 children have been in foster care in the United States. The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families Annual Report FY2020 states that, “Throughout FY2020, DCF served approximately 41,500 families, including 75,400 children and young adults from birth to age 22. White, Hispanic/Latinx, and Black families account for the majority of the children and families involved with the Department.” (7) Among waiting children, the greatest need exists for children over the age of 6 since it becomes more difficult for them to find the right fit as they grow older.

A lot goes into molding and shaping the minds of growing children. An education, love and a connection, a roof over their head, ample food and water to sustain their growing minds and bodies. Children given up for adoption and foster care have even less of a starting point than others. As the children grow up, they begin to question their worth and adoption agencies/foster care centers aren't equipped to handle their needs. This is due to lack of resources as there are too many children to get specialized attention. Foster care centers can only do so much to address each and every one of the children's needs.

In 2020, the DCF enacted budget was \$1,058,279,339 and further analysis into MARE Inc's revenue and expenses will be explained in the budget section. “significant 43.6% increases in DCF funding between FY2012 and FY2020, with the steepest gains being made in the past six years. These increases supported increased service cost (p.42), staffing (p.43), and facilitated

workload reduction for staff(44)” (40) That amount of money may seem ample, but compared to the amount of children that are under the umbrella and care of MARE, it is chipped away.

They deserve an equal opportunity and fighting chance to make their mark in this world. They need someone to invest in them and believe that they are capable of more than the cards they were dealt. Those that want to help them: social service workers, case workers, family resources, and litigators are improperly imbursed for their meaningful work and do all they can to help them find their forever home. There are real children in need of a home and a family out there that will love them for who they are.

Statement of Request

In addition to being the middleman, MARE has been an extraordinary shelter of knowledge that strives for public awareness and holds recruitment programs to inform the public. Using these programs to attract potential adoptive families, MARE is able to help them navigate the adoption process and raises awareness through in-person engagement. There are 3 types of MARE hosted events: adoption matching events, family support events, and fundraising events. For the purpose of raising awareness and the focus of this proposal, we will be focusing on adoption matching events. They are casual, interactive mixers that provide families the opportunity to learn more about foster care adoption, meet waiting children, and network with social workers.

The Newton, Massachusetts Mattress Firm location would provide a safe place for prospective families to learn about the process and meet children in the system to start building relationships. It is important to respect the children's boundaries and understand that meeting new people may be overwhelming to them. There is no guarantee that they will find their family at each event, as long as they have the option to put themselves out there and have fun. Mattress Firm especially stuck out because of your commitment to aiding the community of bridging families and spreading the love. Securing the location to put on recurring events and utilizing money to aid the events aligns with Mattress Firm's values.

In addition to hosting events at the Newton location, MARE will apply to be a partner of their foundation program. Called Mattress Firm Foster Kids, it is a program of the Ticket to Dream Foundation™ and was launched in December 2015. The main purpose of this proposal is to hold more adoption matching events, but becoming a partner of Mattress Firm Foster Kids can help

sustain this initiative further into the future. It is a recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit that joins forces with local foster care non-profit partners and communities in an effort to help foster kids beat the odds. Partnering with local foster care agencies, there are two requirements for applicants: be from recognized 501(c)(3) organizations, as they do not donate to individuals, and agencies must have their 501(c)(3) status in place for two years prior to date of application. As of today, the only partner that they have in Massachusetts is Children's Services of Roxbury.

Description of Proposed Work

This project will consist of event planning and delegating the budget. I must also determine what continuing resources I can offer MARE in addition to strengthening their partnership with Mattress Firm to ensure longevity. My team and I will plan out the events well in advance to iron out any issues that may arise and consider the social impacts each event holds. Due to working out the logistics, the dates are to be determined, but tentative placeholders will be one event in the Fall and one event in the Spring. As we are learning the steps necessary to put on the events, it is my intention to put on events on a monthly basis to create more regularly scheduled opportunities. I will be on-site for every event to manage and ensure that the event will go off without a hitch.

We will decide on an activity or a few bonding exercises to break the ice and foster a welcoming environment to socialize. When we have secured vendors and desired refreshments, we will use our marketing funds to creatively advertise our events in hopes of reaching potential families. Utilizing the internet and online communication will help modernize our approach. Working with social workers, children in the system are invited to attend these events to meet potential families and participate in engaging, fun activities. There is no pressure on the children as this is not a required event, but would be a superb option for them to attend to become comfortable with holding conversations and being a part of an accepting community.

After marketing the event and spreading the word, I will create a logistical plan outlining all of the details for the detail. That includes materials and supplies needed, agenda, schedule, volunteer and staff roles, and floorplan. These events will be my main focus as I can devote time

and talent to this cause that I am passionate about. During the event, I will have a system to log how many attendees there were and use those statistics to plan future events. Considering whether the COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing crisis, I will provide safety measures and precautions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all that attend. That will be factored into making the final logistical plan and will address all components.

Description of Available Facilities

When looking at MARE's current partners on their website, Jordan's Furniture has been one since 1998. "The Jordan's Initiative is a public/private partnership between MARE, DCF, other contracted adoption agencies and Jordan's Furniture that focuses on public education and recruitment for children in foster care. Jordan's Furniture hosts numerous adoption events at their stores, hosts the Heart Gallery and MARE's Walk for Adoption and has provided financial support to MARE for many years." Jordan's Furniture has held occasional events for MARE at their Massachusetts location, but my initiative is to hold more monthly events to create a more stable structure of outreach.

Inspired by their initiative, I found Mattress Firm in Newton to be another location to hold events, especially adoption matching events, because it is the first step to getting involved and gathering interest. In partnering with Mattress Firm in Newton, Massachusetts, a section of the store can be the location for the events and other funds can be allocated for fun activities to keep families engaged. One event will be held during the Fall and will be open to families at any stage of the adoption process. The second event will be held in the Spring and limited to families with an approved home study who are ready to meet waiting children.

Qualifications of personnel

Jade Tang, Project Manager

As an Event Coordinator with UMass Amherst's University Programming Council, I have experience planning events. I have executed extravagant night out events and weekly movie showings for a student body of 25,000+. Turnouts have ranged from 20-500 attendees and had multiple elements going into the planning and execution. Some events that I have put on with my team include an Elf movie showing hot chocolate and cookies, a mind reading show, and an arts and crafts event with plenty of activities and refreshments. Working in childcare for 4+ years, I also have experience working with children and have developed interpersonal skills that would help aid the relations among this project.

Despite my continued interest in researching the cause, I still have a lot to learn about the foster care system and adoption. Aside from money, I will be dedicating countless hours towards research for the grant proposal and will work endlessly to see this project through. I will work with MARE to get a better understanding of how their events are structured and the values they want to uphold. Putting on innovative events for a cause that is close to my heart is perfect considering my skill set and drive. This project simply combines my passions and makes it into reality that could change the lives of deserving human beings.

Resume

JADE TANG

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jade-tang-b1b946148/>

Quincy, Massachusetts 02169 (781)558-6398 Jadetang81400@yahoo.com

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in English, expected May 2022

University of Massachusetts Amherst

- GPA: 4.0, Dean's list Spring 2021, Certificate in Professional Writing and Technical Communication

Associate of Arts in English, September 2020-Winter 2021

Quincy College, Quincy, Massachusetts

- GPA: 3.9, Summa Cum Laude

Technological Skills: MS Office Applications such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, Google Drive

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Late Night Event Coordinator

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, September 2021-present

- Scheduled and planned movies for every Friday and Sunday night
- Organized campus wide events for the first Friday of each month
- Supervised volunteers for setup, during the event, and clean up
- Completed contracts, worked with vendors and a team, and brainstormed event ideas

Administrative Assistant

Quincy College, Quincy, MA, September 2019-January 2021

- Helped in the advising, admissions, and marketing offices
- Used personal knowledge and skillset to greet and help prospective students
- Conducted tours of the campus
- Filed documents, prepared for events, and answered the phone

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Caregiver

Self-employed, Quincy, MA, August 2019-September 2021

- Working with 4 different families over the time span, provided quality child care for children ranging from ages 6 months old to 10 years old
- Engaged in educational games and outdoor activities with them
- Responsible for their safety as well as provided transportation, companionship, and be a positive role model

Attendant

South Shore YMCA, Quincy, MA, October 2017-March 2020

- Supervised children during play and activities
- Greeted parents while signing them in with their children
- Assisted in fundraising events and activities

Receptionist

Zen Nails & Spa, Braintree, MA, January 2015-August 2016

- Greeted customers as they walked in and coordinated them with nail technicians
- Handled the cash register
- Answered the phone and made appointments
- Enhanced customer satisfaction by delivering beverages and answering questions

MARE Staff and Leaders

Danielle Conti, Director of Development (617) 964-6273 ext. 114,

daniellec@mareinc.org



Danielle has over 25 years of Development experience, 6 of which have been in the adoption field. Before joining the MARE staff, she was working as the Director of Resource Development for the United Way in Springfield, MO. Danielle has worked in a leadership position in multiple social service settings including the Ronald McDonald House, Harmony House, House of Hope domestic violence shelter, and FosterAdoptConnect. Danielle is an adoptive parent. In January of 2020, she assumed the position of Director of Development at MARE. She is responsible for leading an effective fundraising plan for the agency and acting as one of the key community relations persons for the organization.

Ricardo L. Franco, LSW – Director of Family Support Services (617)

964-6273 ext. 111, ricardof@mareinc.org



Ricardo is a licensed, bi-lingual social worker (LSW) and has been an invaluable contributor to MARE for the past eleven years. He has served in roles as Family Support Services Coordinator, Latinx Services Coordinator and liaison of Faith-Based Initiatives. In addition to his work with MARE, Ricardo is an ordained minister with a doctoral degree in religion and brings a wealth of knowledge about multicultural community engagement and the intersectionality of faith and social issues. Ricardo directs all family support services and programs of the agency.

Lisa Funaro, LICSW – Executive Director (617) 964-6273 ext. 113,

lisaf@mareinc.org



Lisa has over 35 years of experience in the adoption field. She began her career as an intern and then recruitment coordinator at MARE in the 1980's. Before returning to MARE as Executive Director in 2006, she served as Executive Director of the Ocean State Adoption Resource Exchange, now Adoption Rhode Island. She was also the Director of Adoption for Cambridge Family & Children's Service and directed adoption programs for Act of Love Adoptions and Boston Children's Services. Lisa is ultimately responsible for all of MARE's programs, services, budgets, and equipment and oversees a staff of 16. Lisa was nominated by Congressman Joseph Kennedy III and was named a 2013 Angels in Adoption honoree by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

Bridget Chiaruttini, LICSW - Associate Director (617) 964-6273 ext. 112,

bridgetc@mareinc.org



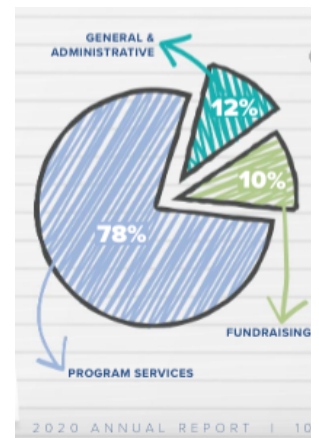
Bridget has over 15 years of experience in the adoption field. Before joining the MARE staff, she was the Clinical Coordinator and then Program Director for a Boston adoption and foster care program. Bridget was first hired at MARE to manage all of MARE's child recruitment and family support programs and in September of 2016 assumed the Associate Director position. She oversees the day-to-day operations of the agency's child recruitment, family support, communications, and public relations functions.

Budget

When breaking down MARE's financials in 2020, total expenses came out to be 1.57 million meanwhile their total support and revenue came out to be 1.50 million. 78% was for program services, 12% towards general and administrative, and 10% for fundraising. Consistent in annual reports, expenses for program services take up a majority of their revenue. For this proposal 100,000 dollars to fund at least two events per year is reasonable. This would include base fees of using Mattress Firm as a location, activities for attendees to do such as arts and crafts or board games, transportation, marketing the events, pay vendors/employees to facilitate, refreshments, and other expenses that arise like decorations.

Location	\$5,000
Activities and giveaways	\$6,000
Transportation	\$1,000
Marketing	\$10,000
Vendors/employees	\$50,000
Refreshments	\$5,000
Decorations	\$3,000
ETC.	\$5,000
Total	\$85,000

FY20 Financials		
REVENUE:		
Department of Children & Families	\$	769,032
Individual Donations		117,863
Grants & Corporate Support		413,653
Events		127,927
In-Kind, Other		77,373
Total Support & Revenue	\$	1,505,848
EXPENSES:		
Program Services	\$	1,232,548
General & Administrative		195,745
Fundraising		149,087
Total Expenses	\$	1,577,380
ASSETS:		
Net Assets Beginning of Year	\$	377,797
Net Assets End of Year		306,265
Change in Net Assets	\$	(71,532)



\$5,000 would go towards securing the location and cover insurance in case of any liabilities. Depending on the planned activities and giveaways, \$6,000 is an ample amount of money to supply a solid foundation. Transportation is to factor in if any of the event staff, volunteers, children, and social workers need a way to get from their starting point to Mattress Firm. This can mean a public transit pass, gas reimbursement, or ride sharing. \$10,000 for marketing will lead to a bigger turnout and raise awareness for the main purpose of these events, educating the public about foster care and adoption. The vendors working the events and employees that devoted time and their skillset to execute these events will properly be paid. Having refreshments makes the events more appealing and is a treat for attendees. Decorations enhance the overall feel of the event and can foster a more welcoming atmosphere. \$5,000 for ETC. is essentially our safety net to use just in case of any last minute matters.

Summary

There must be awareness about children in adoption and foster care to give them sufficient support and love. Successfully planning at least two events for Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE Inc.) at Mattress Firm in Newton, Massachusetts is absolutely doable and will be immensely beneficial for all parties involved. I have defined the areas in which I need more information for going further and what is necessary to execute them efficiently. Furthermore, I have established the potential impact this project can have for waiting children registered with MARE. The value attached with this topic, as well as the work already put into this proposal, makes it a secure and low-risk endeavor worth pursuing further. It's time to invest in our future.

Due to the lack of awareness, there is a deficit among funds and resources given to adoption and foster care centers. Without the recognition, it becomes harder to educate those willing to learn and this can hinder the ability for children to find their families. There are newborns to 18 year olds in the system that are in need of loving support systems and the tortuous waiting can affect them mentally and physically. This project would create opportunities to hold at least two MARE Inc. adoption matching events at Mattress Firm in Newton, Massachusetts. By holding events, prospective and interested families are able to learn more about foster care adoption. The events would also be great learning blocks for the children and strengthen their communication skills as they are exposed to new people.

Works Cited

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<https://www.mattressfirmfosterkids.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=cms.page&id=1028>.

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<https://www.mareinc.org/page/our-partners>.

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