

# I'm a Believer!

by Judy Howell, President MFCA

*I thought love was only true  
in fairy tales  
Meant for someone else  
but not for me.*

*Love was out to get me  
That's the way it seemed.*

*Disappointment haunted  
all my dreams.*

Neil Diamond

Two hundred fifty labeled and disheveled doll children lay in boxes, sorted by ages and sex. Yellow case files filled with information – diagnoses, forms, likes and dislikes – lay included in the boxes to travel with the doll children. The doll children were silent, just as the real doll children's voices were silent in determining their best interest – return to family of origin, kinship, foster or adoptive care.

Each doll child had been carefully processed. They had been looked over and labeled and written about. The details of their lives lay in the yellow file folder like an open book. The folder contained private and personal information. Secrets, secrets that would soon be shared with strangers. Would the strangers care about these secrets? Would the stranger understand? Would the stranger judge the reality of these secrets and shame or blame the doll child? Strangers?

Would they care for the doll child?  
Would they care about the doll child?

*There was a difference.  
The doll child knew.*

Silently the doll child wondered, "To whose home will I travel? What will the stranger be like? Will it be a family? Will I have a home? Or will I, the new doll child land in the care of a stranger in a house. Perhaps a pretty house, but only a house, not a home. Perhaps nice people, but not a family I can call my own."

*There was a difference.  
The doll child knew.*

The doll child's file was stamped and approved and along with the child was heading into the hands of a stranger called a legislator. The doll child knew that there were two house possibilities. The first house was owned by people named the Senators and the second by the Representatives. Both were suppose to be qualified caregivers. Rumors among the doll children had whispered that for many of the caregivers this would be their first experience caring for another family's child. Perhaps life would get worse and not better.

Social services had assured the doll child that the person who would be the doll child's caregiver had been chosen by many people in a vote and held an honorary foster care license. "Um", the doll child thought, "being chosen and licensed didn't mean much. What mattered was the reality of living.

Was this a home?  
Was this a family?"

*There was a difference.  
The doll child knew.*

*I thought love was more or less  
a given thing,  
Seems the more I gave the less I got.  
What's the use in trying'?*

*All you get is pain.*

*When I needed sunshine I got  
rain.*

Neil Diamond



The doll child sighed. The car door closed and the next stop was the house. Would it become a home?  
*There was a difference.  
The doll child knew.*

Our doll children represent the over 18,000 Minnesota children needing out of home relative or foster care a year. At any one time almost 12,000 children live in over 5,000 foster homes licensed for 13,000 beds. Twenty percent of these children live with relatives. In addition, almost 900 children (876) live in pre-adoptive care, almost thirty percent (186) with pre-adoptive relatives.

The passage from one family to another can mean many things. It can mean the potential for dreams, hopes and desires to be realized. The doll child who loves singing, joins the church or school choir and watches those she lives with smile at her music. The doll child who loves baseball plays on little league and adults come to root for success at bat. The doll child who cannot read gets special services to help read and is snuggled in arms who help read and support the child's struggles.

It takes special adults to walk along side a doll child. It takes adults who are willing to lay down a piece of their own life for a doll child. And, these adults stretch and grow and try to understand the doll child, not just on the surface, but with deeper insight. These adults of strength adapt and change so that the doll child may also change and become. Yet even in changing these special adults remain true to their own values and respect for self.

*I am a believer* in the resiliency of the human spirit of a doll child when another adult believes they are worthy of great things.

*I am a believer* in families – both birth and care giving families.

*I am a believer* in loving, respectful, family homes for children.

*I am a believer* in foster, adoption, and kinship care for children who need alternative care during complex times in their families.

*I am a believer* in the human spirit's ability to see beyond today and look toward the potential reality for the future.

**T**hank you to all of our foster, adoptive and kinship caregivers. Thank you to our legislators who are taking on this task of understanding the realities of being one of our state's neediest children.

**Thank you** to the families who care

for our doll children, who honor their inner spirits and help them grow and develop into productive young adults.

Are you a family available to provide a home for a doll child?

*There is a difference.*

*The doll child knows.*



God Bless

Judy Howell, President,  
MFCA

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*We need more foster, kinship and adoptive parents as members.  
Get your friends to join MFCA and keep up the great job Minnesota!*

Judy Howell  
2119 Lake Elmo Ave N.  
Lake Elmo, MN 55042  
Telephone: 651-770-1247  
Fax: 651-770-7571